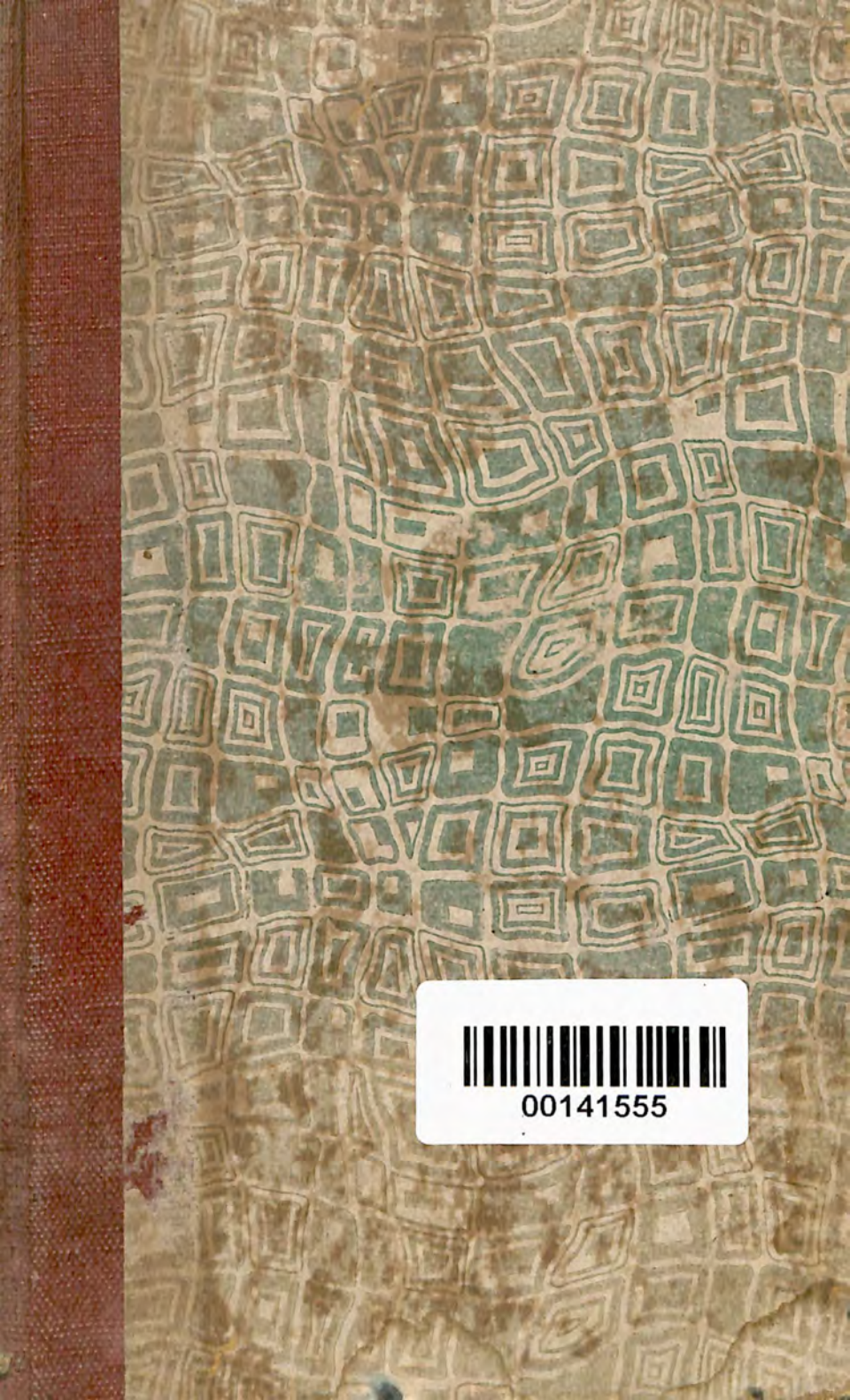
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MARY, BARONESS HOLLAND,

Wife of Stephen, 2nd Lord Holland

FROM A CRAYON DRAWING IN THE POSSESSION OF THE R^T HON. R. VERNON SMITH, M.P.

LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

14,555
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THE COUNTESS OF OSSORY,

FROM THE YEAR 1769 TO 1797.

BY HORACE WALPOLE,

LORD ORFORD.

NOW FIRST PRINTED FROM ORIGINAL MSS.

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EDITED, WITH NOTES, BY

THE RT. HON. R. VERNON SMITH, M.P.

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ERRATA.

Vol. I. p. 325, line 7 of note, *for* disarming *read* discerning; and eleven lines lower, *for* Wolverston *read* Winterslow.

Vol. II. p. 346, five lines from bottom, *for* tag *read* jig.

„ p. 416, the Note should be removed to p. 414, and the reference placed on Holland's,* line 3 of the text.

LETTERS

TO

THE COUNTESS OF OSSORY

BY

THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

LETTER CLXXXIII.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 1, 1780.

I HAVE suspected, for some time, madam, that I am growing superannuated, and now I am sure of it, for I don't know what I say. I certainly did not, if I told your ladyship that I was going to Nuneham for a *fortnight.* I meant to stay but two nights, and literally did stay but three; and the reason I gave you, not having been there in two years, was the worst reason I had to give, another proof of dotage; for besides the visit to Lord and Lady Harcourt, to whom I certainly have great obligations, my journey comprehended two visits (going and coming) to Mr. Conway, who still kept his bed; and moreover I was to meet Mr. Mason at Nuneham. All this is not an excuse of myself, but an accusation. Your ladyship's is not quite so just.

You know I offered myself at Ampthill first, and your election, and then your immediate removal to Farming Woods, prevented my paying my first duty to your ladyship and Lord Ossory; and when I pleaded a debt to Lord Harcourt, I did and could mean nothing but the specific moment in which I was to go to him. Different fits of illness, and close confinement have interrupted several intended journeys to Ampthill; and all last year I was literally not out of my own house once, no, not once, I mean not to sleep anywhere else. I certainly am better at present than I have been these five years, and if it continues, will indubitably wait on you; it shall certainly be the first visit I will pay any where.

As I have been returned above a fortnight I should have written had I had a syllable to tell you; but what could I tell you from that melancholy and very small circle at Twickenham Park almost the only place I do go to in the country, partly out of charity, and partly as I have scarce any other society left which I prefer to it; for, without entering on too melancholy a detail, recollect, madam, that I have outlived most of those to whom I was habituated, Lady Hervey, Lady Suffolk, Lady Blandford—my dear old friend, I should probably never have seen again—yet that is a deeper loss, indeed! She has left me all her MSS.—a compact between us—in one word I had, at her earnest request, consented to accept them, on condition she should leave me nothing else. She had, indeed, intended to leave me her little all, but I declared I would never set

foot in Paris again (this was ten years ago) if she did not engage to retract that destination. To satisfy her, I at last agreed to accept her papers, and one thin gold box with the portrait of her dog. I have written to beg her dog itself, which is so cross, that I am sure nobody else would treat it well; and I have ordered her own servant who read all letters to her to pick out all the letters of living persons, and restore them to the several writers without my seeing them.

Were I vain-glorious, to be sure I might have boasted of passing a second evening with Lord and Lady North —nay, at their own palace. Perhaps you will think I am going to be swaddled in ermine in my dotage like old Brudenel; but be assured, madam, that I do not design to have robes and a coronet laid on my death-bed like Lord Hunsdon.

I came to town on Sunday to pay my duty to the Duke of Gloucester, who, however, did not arrive till last night. I never saw him look so well and so robust. He returns on Saturday to stay till after Christmas: so shall I, but for only two or three days, as all my few acquaintance have left my neighbourhood, and as I do not think it prudent, at this critical time of the year, for me to be much in the country. I may be in a busy scene here for aught I know, but I take care to have no business with it. Another phœnix, just like its predecessor, is risen from the ashes of the last Parliament; and I suppose will have the final honour of consuming its own nest. Lord Ossory, I conclude,

is arrived, and will tell you particulars of which I am informed only by the newspapers.

George I have seen in his paternal mansion, and drank tea with him and his adopted babe and its governess, and Mr. Storer. He goes every night at nine to the new Irish Queen's *couchée.*

Your 'Barbary traveller' is probably an ape of Mr. Bruce, and hopes to lie himself unto 7,000*l.* I can sooner believe that savages eat living beef-stakes than that they imitate our pitiful European vice of insincerity. The impulse of nature may make us knock out the brains of an enemy; but it must be long tutored, and civilised, and polished, and refined, before we sell our country and posterity for a mess of potage.

As your ladyship has long had the bulk of my book, my last volume (and *last* volume it shall be), it was not worth while to send it to you for the addition of two or three pages; but since you desire it, if I am so lucky as to see Lord Ossory, he shall have it.

LETTER CLXXXIV.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 16, 1780.

It will, I am sensible, madam, look like paying your ladyship for your compliments; and that will look like swallowing them greedily; and yet I must instantly tell you how very much I am charmed with, and applaud your letter to Mr. Stonhewer. I cannot

select such apt words as your own; it was *noble, simple, genuine.* Those epithets belong to handsome actions, not to trifling writings. I do not know what the House of Lords will do; nor have I heard that they know yet. They have appointed a committee on the affair.

Mr. Fitzpatrick's last reply to Adam was excellent; but methinks the man on the white horse in the Revelations, whose name, I think, was Death, is gone forth! I am sorry it is *a white horse.* That did not use to be the colour on which revenge rode; but everything is so confounded now, that one does not know a white horse from a white rose.

A good courtier, yesterday, sang the praises to me of that atrocious villain, Arnold, who, he said, till he heard of André's execution, would not discover the persons at New York, with whom Washington was in secret correspondence; then indeed he did. Only think of the monster! I hope he will be a Privy Counsellor! betraying to Sir Harry Clinton, in the height of his indignation for André, the wretched poor souls cooped up in New York, who are guilty of that correspondence. When I expressed my horror at such bloody treachery, and said I did not doubt but Lord Cornwallis's savage executions had hurried on André's fate, and were, besides cruel, indiscreet; the same apologist said, "Oh! we have more prisoners of theirs than they have of ours." How tender to their *own friends,* who, they do not care if hanged, provided they can spill more buckets of blood! I know no-

thing of poor André; he is much commended, but so he would be, if as black as Arnold.

I am far from guessing why Mr. Sherlock does not write in his own language, unless it is for the reason your ladyship so luckily guesses. I should think everybody in this age could write best in his own. Formerly, before the babel of languages that overwhelmed the Latin, were settled into some idiom, folks wrote better in the tongue of the Romans than they could in their own hodge-podge; but that is no longer the case. Mr. Sherlock's Italian is ten times worse than his French, and more bald. He by no means wants parts, but a good deal more judgment.

I am not got abroad again yet, but think I shall in two or three days: nor have I heard anything new, or more than I tell you; except its being said now that Lord George Gordon will not be tried this term.

LETTER CLXXXV.

Sunday, Nov. 26, 1780.

My aches are not so mighty, madam, as to merit your obliging inquiry after them; they come and go, and are rather omens of crippletude than positive evils. One should not mention marks of decay as illness, for is there a remedy for old age? I do not condemn Medea, who knew there was no other than chopping her father into cutlets. Miss Vernon's disorder is of consequence; beauty and youth should be tended; I am sure she will want no attention at Ampthill.

I may totter as much as I please; I believe the dowagers on either hand of me have a very different idea of me; at least if they keep watch and ward at their windows, as dowagers sometimes do. Two mornings ago they might have seen me receive, first, Dr. Hunter, and a moment after, Lady Craven—a man-midwife and so pretty a woman are very creditable; and yet, alas! he came to talk to me about Greek medals, and she of a new comedy she is writing.

A still odder thing happened at night: I asked Lady Bute who this Prince Callimanco is (for so I am sure the mob will call him) who is coming from Naples. "Lord," said she, "don't you know? Why he is the favourite of the Queen of Naples." "That I should have thought," said I, "would rather be a reason for his *not* coming." "Oh," said she, "I suppose she is tired of him." Should one have expected, that of all living beings *that* would have been a topic for Lord Bute's wife to have tapped! The same night, at Lady Holdernesse's, I saw Lady Grantham: as she is not *my* wife, I really think her very tolerable. She was well dressed, behaved like a human creature, and not like her sister or a college-tutor. Her lord is to kiss hands to-morrow as first Lord of Trade.

I do not find that Lord Deerhurst is dead yet, nor has lost his eye; but the surgeons despair of him.

We and Holland grow very fractious. We bully, and so we have done before, and then drew in our horns: they will not mind, nor I dare to say go to war with us; but do us all the hurt they can. They

have offered us another bitter pill; and I am sure we kicked at that with all possible temper. His majesty asked his lordship, Master Fred, the new lord-lieutenant, whether he should swallow it. Master Fred, who has been lord-lieutenant about six thousand—seconds, advised King George not to take such a nasty potion, and so King George has begged to be excused; and so I suppose the Dutch agent will go to Ireland, whether they will or not; and Master Eden will be ready to offer to make it up as he did in America. *Ma foi, vive la dignité!* We have bullied ourselves, as the vulgar say, out of house and home, and solve all by saying, I wont say I have been in the wrong.

There is a new comedy, called the "Generous Impostor," which Mrs. Crewe and all Sheridan's protectors protect, though he did not write it; but I hear it is most indifferent. It is a translation or imitation of "Le Dissipateur."

Lord Macartney's speech pleased much at the India House, and I hear his chance improves, of which I am very glad. It is said that the Nabob of Arcot has litterally bought four members of parliament to guard his interests—I thought he had taken much higher precautions. I like this purchase, as we are grown perectly ridiculous and contemptible—the more we grow so, the more diverting. When we have Cardinals I suppose they will be protectors of different nations as at Rome: Cardinal Hurd of the Duke of Mecklenburgh, and Cardinal Cornwallis of the Pope.

Monday.

Keith Stewart arrived on Saturday in a dismal way, and with a dismal account. He was forced to push to England to save his ship from foundering, saw three others of Rowley's fleet dismasted and four missing. All this is hushed up as much as possible, lest we should be frightened and not continue to knock our heads against stone walls, and wintery oceans, and fatal climates. We tremble, too, in whispers about D'Estaing's and Guichen's junction. The Duke of Northumberland, who never was old till a fortnight ago, had an audience on Friday to have leave to resign from infirmity, but as that is no incapacity, he was pressed to stay, and was convinced.

I dined with the Lucans yesterday. After dinner Lord Clermont informed us that in the course of his reading, he had found that Scipio first introduced the use of toothpicks from Spain. I did not know so much; nor that his lordship ever did read, or knew that Scipio was any body but a race-horse. His classic author, probably, is Marsh upon the Gums. Lord Melbourne is to be a viscount, and in time will read—*en voilà pour aujourdhui!*

LETTER CLXXXVI.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 5, 1780.

I HAVE the best of all excuses, madam, and that which a saint might make, for not having mentioned the pictures of Hogarth at Bristol, of which Lord

Shelburne is so good as to inform me. I should have specified if I had known of them, because, being in a church, they are considerable enough: otherwise, I confined myself to his pictures that were not portraits, the latter being too numerous; and to the prints from his works for the use of collectors. I am much flattered by Lord Shelburne's approbation, though I am sorry he gives himself time to read such idle books; and I am obliged by your ladyship's haste to acquaint me with my omission; though, I assure you, I shall not be pressed to repair it, as it will be long, I believe, before there is occasion for a new edition. I printed 600 to supply the purchases of the two editions of the former volumes. Not above a quarter are sold yet, and I have no right to settle in my bookseller's shop; one should only pass through it, or not go thither. I remember a story of poor Dr. Chapman, one of Dr. Middleton's antagonists, but I have so entirely forgotten his works that I shall tell it very lamely. He went to his bookseller, and asked how his last work had sold? "Very indifferently, indeed, sir." "Ay! why how many are gone off?" "Only five, sir!" "Alack! and how many of my 'Eusebius' (I think it was) have you left?" "Two hundred, sir!" "Indeed! well, but my book on (I don't know what), how many have you of them?" "Oh! the whole impression, sir!" "Good now! good now! that is much!" "Well! Mr. —, I cannot help it; I do my duty, and satisfy my conscience."

I will write on; not being so conscientious as Dr.

Chapman, I shall accept or take my quietus; but as we are only among ourselves, I will tell your ladyship another old story *à propos* to Lord Shelburne's reading idle books.

After Sir Paul Methuen had quitted court, the late queen, who thought she had that foolish talent of playing off people, frequently saw him when she dined abroad, during the king's absences at Hanover. Once that she dined with my mother at Chelsea, Sir Paul was there as usual. People that play off others, generally harp on the same string. The queen's constant topic for teazing Sir Paul was his passion for romances, and he was weary of it, and not in good humour with her. "Well, Sir Paul, what romance are you reading now?" "None, madam! I have gone through them all." "Well! what are you reading then?" "I am got into a very foolish study, madam; the history of the Kings and Queens of England." Perhaps Lord Shelburne thinks romances as wise a study.

I know nothing of yesterday's debate more than you will see in the papers, madam; nor of anything else; no, not the title of Lady Craven's play, which, not being quite born, perhaps is not christened.

When you write to Lady Warwick, I wish your ladyship would persuade her (with her earl's leave) to bring to town a most curious book, which I once looked over in his father's time. It is a folio, by one John Thorpe, in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I., and contains many ground plans and a few uprights of

several goodly mansions of those days, of some of which John Thorpe was the architect. This is not mere personal curiosity: I have found in my notes that in that book is a plan of *the old house* at Ampthill, altered by John Thorpe. I want to see whether that Ampthill is your Ampthill or Houghton. It is a pity the book is not engraved: being only lines it would not cost much, indeed many persons would be glad to subscribe for it. As Mr. Charles Greville is a *savio*, I marvel he does not promote it. Did I ever tell you, madam, that Elizabeth Duchess of Exeter, sister of our Harry IV., and her second husband, Sir J. Cornwall Lord Fanhope, lived at Ampthill, and he died there? Their portraits in painted glass were in the church, whence there is a pretty print in Sandford's "Genealogic History of the Kings of England;" but I dare to say that I have told you this before, *et que voilà de ma radoterie*,—it is a proof at least that I dote on Ampthill.

LETTER CLXXXVII.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 11, 1780.

WHETHER you are glad or sorry, or neither, my lady, the empress-queen is dead, and Miss Bingham is to succeed her. Oh! no, I mistake; the latter is only to be Lady Althorpe at present. But I believe another empress-queen will feel her crown totter a little by this match. It was declared at Devonshire-House on

Saturday after the opera, and the emperor—stay, I mean Admiral Darby was to beat Monsieur D'Estaing yesterday, and everybody was in such spirits on these three great events, for the emperor is to march directly into Lorrain, and Lord Spencer is to convoy—Lord bless me, I heard so much of all those matters, that I do nothing but confound them, and don't know one from t'other, so I will say no more on them.

I saw Madame la Baronne last night at Madame de Welderen's, ay, and the baron, too; he is well enough, and she looked very well.

I know nothing else upon earth or water, but I have sent your ladyship enough to spread upon many slices of conversation, and that is the great use of letters in the country.

LETTER CLXXXVIII.

Berkeley Square, Sunday, Dec. 17, 1780.

No, madam, I have been much out of order, as the outworks have for some time been in ruins, I thought the citadel itself was at last, to use an old word, beleaguered. In short, for some days I had a pain in my stomach; and never having had it there, nor knowing how it feels there, I concluded it was the gout. But it took another turn, and became a disorder that has been fashionable, and was almost gone out of fashion; just the time when the ancient generally adopt modes. I am pretty well again, but look ruefully as you may believe, for I can afford to part with very little of *my*

embonpoint. You ask if I shall pass my Christmas in town; I know and feel it is a kind question; but I must answer, alas! yes. I am grown an Astracan lamb, and vegetate in one spot. George Selwyn says he told your ladyship that I am out of spirits. I did not know it particularly, nor have any cause; but I am sensible they often flag; and one reason for my reluctance to go anywhere is, that if I am not perfectly quiet all the morning, I am exhausted before night. This, with twenty other decays of which I am sensible, makes me shun what I am not fit for.

I will return Lord S.'s letter when I have the honour of seeing your ladyship. I do not know whether he judges rightly of certain persons just at present. It has been their mood, and may be so still; and I know *one* that having tried others and been rejected, is willing, nay desirous, of trying with those Lord S. means, what he tried last year; but I should wonder if they were accepted now, unless to expose them, which is not worth while. Nobody blots flimsy blotting paper out of spite.

My old acquaintance, or rather my acquaintance, old Lady Shelburne, I see by the papers, is dead. How has she left her fortune, once so great, but which with superabundant cunning she had rendered almost as crazy as she was latterly?

Your aunt was charming about Madame la Baronne, till *almost* the last minute, and told me they would have very little. But indeed when people were in love with one another! However, I suppose to accustom

them to economy, she did not give the baron a dinner even on the wedding-day, and he begged one of the parson that was to marry them. The kitchen was as cold the next day, and the turtles pecked on the same parson's board.

Mr. Morrice has been in England above these two months. I have not seen him, for he has been laid up with the gout at Chiswick from within a week of his arrival, when, I hear, he looked as ill as when he went abroad. I thought Lord John much broken before he went out of town.

The Crapaudines begin to discover amazing charms in Miss Bingham. One of them, as Lord Althorpe was talking to her, went up to him, and, holding up her fan that Miss might not *see* what she said, told him, "She is a sweet creature!" Another of them repeated this; and yet I would not swear was not the very person that said it; for, if a court is no bigger than an egg-shell, it is equally full of jealousy and treachery. I wish the inhabitants of any Court would write comedies—if they could speak truth. They would need but to write down what they have seen and heard—and there would be character with a witness! Lord Hervey did leave a Dialogue of one whole day in the late King's reign, that is, of what commonly passed there. It was not, I believe exactly what I mean, but rather a ridicule on the individuals of the *dramatis personæ*; I never saw it, but Lady Hervey told me it was the best thing he ever wrote: however, those would be transient ridicules. I would only have gene-

ral nature, when it has been refined and strained through the thousand sieves of self-love, ambition, envy, malice, mischief, design, treachery, falsehood, and professions, glazed over with perfect ease, good-breeding, and good-humour, and the passions only evaporating through invisible pores, but the angles of the atoms as sharp as needles and mortal as diamond dust. But how could one describe smiles that assent away another's favour, or a bow purposely omitted, and then recollected as designedly to tell a person he is in disgrace before he knew it himself? Could a pit or gallery comprehend the importance assumed by a bedchamber-woman or a page of the back stairs, in denying some arrant-trifle that was a secret in the morning and is to be in the "Gazette" at night? I caught Lady S. t'other night in one of these mysteries; it was two nights before Lord Althorpe's match was owned; but I had supped at Lord Lucan's with the whole Court of Spencer, and Lord A. had sat at a side-table with the two girls, Miss Molesworth and old Miss Shipley. I knew if I asked directly, I should be answered, "upon my word *I* know nothing of the matter;" so, after supper, sitting by Lady S. on a settee, I said, "Pray, Lady S., is it owned that Lord A. is to marry—Miss Shipley?" She burst out a-laughing, and could not recompose her face again.

I fear, by your ladyship's account, that Miss Vernon ought to go abroad; and, if she ought, surely no time should be lost. Old Dr. Monro told my father that he scarce knew anything that asses' milk and change of

air would not cure, and that it was better to go into a bad air than not to change it often.

My being confined and idle has made me scribble a volume about nothing. I hope you will be as *désœuvrée* when you are to read it.

Just as I had finished my letter, I learnt the dreadful calamity that happened at the Opera-house last night. Don't be alarmed, madam; not a life is lost—yet. There *was* a fire, and it is not yet extinguished. The theatre was brimful in expectation of Vestris. At the end of the second act he appeared; but with so much grace, agility, and strength, that the whole audience fell into convulsions of applause: the men thundered, the ladies, forgetting their delicacy and weakness, clapped with such vehemence, that seventeen broke their arms, sixty-nine sprained their wrists, and three cried bravo! bravissimo! so rashly, that they have not been able to utter so much as *no* since, any more than both Houses of Parliament. I do not love to exaggerate, but the shouts were so loud that they reached Great Russell-street and terrified Lord Mansfield, who thought the mob was coming again and fled to Kane Wood; but, though the true cause was soon discovered, there is to be a camp in the Mews every opera night, and nobody suffered to appear there, but gagged and handcuffed, for really if people are at liberty to applaud what they approve, there is an end of all government!

As folks in the country love to hear of *London fashions*, know, madam, that the reigning one amongst

the *quality* is to go after the opera to the lottery offices, where their ladyships bet with the keepers. You choose any number you please; if it does not come up next day, you pay five guineas; if it does, receive forty, or in proportion to the age of the *tirage.* The Duchess of Devonshire in one day won nine hundred pounds. General Smith, as the luckiest of all mites, is of the most select parties, and chooses the numeros.

LETTER CLXXXIX.

Christmas Day, 1780.

THOUGH you order me to give you an account of myself, madam, I shall not obey, for I cannot give you a good one; and one is so apt to talk of one's self, and by the courtesy of self-love to think every trifle of importance, that I will boldly be out of order if I please, without being responsible to any one; no, not even to a friend.

We have so many enemies, and subdue them so rapidly, that I did not think it was worth while to notify to your ladyship the new war with Holland. Lord Cornwallis, I suppose, will step over and dispatch it in a parenthesis of six weeks, and still be as likely as ever to conquer America. Who is to burn Amsterdam I have not yet heard.

Lord Warwick has already sent me John Thorpe's book, madam, and a most obliging letter. *The* Ampthill is not Houghton-Ampthill, but the individual

palace that stood in your paddock where the cross is, and in which Queen Catherine *lay*, as royal folk did then, though now they and everybody else only *sleep*; and a spacious and goodly mansion it was. There is not the elevation, nor of Kirby Hatton, built by the dancing Chancellor in 1570; but there is the ground plan. I remember wanting to make the last Chancellor Bathurst dance at one of Mons. de Guines' balls. He came thither very drunk, and, as somebody wished to see the Scotch *reel*, I proposed that my Lord Chancellor should dance it.

I am uncommonly glad, madam, that Mr. Coxe is destined for Mentor to your Telemachus. His Travels are by far the most sensible of all those late publications, and his principles of the old rock.

Your heroine at Bath, madam, is from the same quarry in another light, and the counterpart to Cato himself, who accommodated a friend with his own wife, for the sake of virtue, and took her again with as much decorum as possible. Pray read the description in Lucan, or, if you affect not understanding Latin, in Rowe; you will see with what staid gravity those matters were transacted, when good patriots desponded about the commonwealth. I have not a Lucan in town, or would refer you to the spot.

My nieces are indubitably not going abroad, nor do the duke and duchess think of it. They will be in town at the end of next month.

Lord Macartney, I hear, is to sail before that time; Lady Macartney does not go with him. I remember

what a quarto my last letter was, and restrain this within bounds.

P.S. I shall not attempt to see Vestris till the weather is milder, though it is the universal voice that he is the only perfect being that has dropped from the clouds within the memory of man or woman; but then, indeed, nobody allows memory much retrospect, lest they should seem old themselves. When the Parliament meets, he is to be thanked by the Speaker.

LETTER CXC.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 2, 1781.

MERCY on the poor men that are to be in love with Lady Anne, when she comes to maturity of tyranny! If she begins already with enjoining such tasks to her slaves, what will she do in the full career of her power? The Sphinx was a harmless dicky-bird in comparison. To send one four Quipos, and only a hint at an alphabet, and bid one construe four Peruvian verses, without one's having ever learnt a syllable of the language, is despotism unparalleled. She might as well have ordered me to read an Egyptian obelisk, and tell her what was meant by animals so ill drawn that they are like nothing in the creation. My penance is ten times worse; I am to find out rhymes in colours, and thoughts in knots, and cadence in a jangle of orts and ends! I am a Sybil if I believe that any being but a lady's chambermaid can understand the

sense of minced ribands, or discover sentiments in a salmagundi of black and blue, and red and purple, and white. A piece of a tippet may be very good poetry in Lima for aught I know; and such a genius as Dryden would soon have written a whole birth-day gown from as small a sample as Lady Anne has sent me; but for my part I cannot unsew a single stitch of such millinery versification; and though I will not contemptuously return such silken lines directly, I despair of unravelling them, and will only retain them till I have *effilé'd* them for a whole morning, since it seems that a mistake in a single shade may occasion a blunder or perhaps a *double entendre.*

Your ladyship's new year's wishes are infinitely kind, though the *molti e felici* are compliments I can only accept as I would flowers strewed on my urn. I am well again; but my late disorder was, I believe, a little of the gout in my stomach; and when once the flaw begins there, where my only strength lay, it would be silly not to know how precarious the tenure is.

Never deluding myself on that chapter, you will not wonder, madam, that I am little qualified to resolve any questions about the dawn of the next reign. I attend to what is said about the Prince's family no more than I should to a prophet, who should offer to lay before me a vision of the whole next century. Can I forget that I kissed the hand of this Prince of Wales's great, great grandfather, the night but one before he left England for the last time? and that I was then ten years old? Antiquated dukes may hobble into and

out of golden chariots, if they think their corpses look well in them—I should not like to lie in state before I am dead.

Methinks the nation itself is fond of a magnificent funeral, and chooses to call in all countries to its burial, or at least to provoke them to dispatch it. *Et tu, Brute:* even Holland is to give us a stab. The elements, too, have joined the armed neutrality. What a catastrophe that of Barbadoes! yet we are all gaiety, nay, delighted with the Dutch war. We lose provinces and islands, and are comforted by barrels of pickled herrings! Then, madam, what a brave string of Irish peers! they put me in mind of the chain of galley-slaves in Don Quixote. Like them, I dare swear, their new lordships would one and all assure one—they are honest men!

The ancient sovereigns of this isle are come to a *non plus* too. The Countess of Albany is retired into a convent. You know they live at Florence. Last St. Andrew's day, who is the favourite saint *there too*, the count got so beastly drunk, that at night every filthy consequence ensued. The countess complaining, he tore her hair and endeavoured to strangle her. Her screams alarmed the family, and saved her. She privately acquainted the Great Duke, and by his authority and connivance she contrived to take shelter in a convent, declaring she will never return to her husband again, who has in vain reclaimed her from the Great Duke.

Having nothing better to offer as a new year's gift,

I shall add a nuptial ode that I made for Lady Lucan. It would be presumption to hope it, but if Lady Anne would be so good as to translate it into a wisp of party-coloured silk, and stuff a pincushion with it, I should flatter myself with my work being immortal

I.

Hymen, O Hymenæe!
To Althorpe and Bingham
Ye bards, come and sing 'em,
And all the bells ring 'em,
With ding, ding, a dong.

II.

To Althorpe and Bingham
But pray do not ding 'em
With this or that thingum,
That may call up in Bingham
A blush all day long.

III.

Your best wishes bring 'em,
Your best roses fling 'em
O'er the hammock, where Bingham
And Althorpe shall swing 'em,
With ding, ding, a dong.

P. S. I am sorry to add so serious a P.S., as that poor Lady Foley died this morning.

LETTER CXCI.

Jan. 4, 1781.

I RETURN the Quipos, madam, because if I retained them till I understand them, I fear you would never have them again. I should as soon be able to hold a dialogue with a rainbow, by the help of its grammar, a prism, for I have not yet discovered which is the

first or last verse of four lines that hang like ropes of onions. Yet it is not for want of study, or want of respect for the Peruvian manner of writing. I perceive it is a very soft language, and, though at first I tangled the poem and spoiled the rhymes, yet I can conceive that a harlequin's jacket, artfully arranged by a princess of the blood of Mango Capac, may contain a deep tragedy, and that a tawdry trimming may be a version of Solomon's Song. Nay, I can already say my alphabet of six colours, and know that each stands indiscriminately *but* for four letters, which gives the Peruvian a great advantage over the Hebrew tongue, in which the total want of vowels left every word at the mercy of the reader; and, though our salvation depended upon it, we did not know precisely what any word signified, till the invention of points, that were not used till the language had been obsolete for some thousands of years. A little uncertainty, as where one has but one letter instead of four, may give rise to many beauties. Puns must be greatly assisted by that ambiguity, and the delicacies of the language may depend on an almost imperceptible variation in the shades, as the perfection of the Chinese consists in possessing but very few syllables, each of which admits ten thousand accents, and thence pronunciation is the most difficult part of their literature.

At first sight, the resemblance of blue and green by candlelight seems to be an objection to the Peruvian; but any learned mercer might obviate that, by opposing indigo to grass-green, and ultra-marine

to *verd de pomme.* The more expert one were at *nuances*, the more poetic one should be, or the more eloquent. A vermilion *A* must denote a weaker accent, or even passion, than one of carmine and crimson; and a straw-colour *U* be much more tender than one approaching to orange.

I have heard of a French perfumer who wrote an essay on the harmony of essences. Why should not that idea be extended? The Peruvian Quipos adapted a language to the eyes, rather than to the ears. Why should not there be one for the nose? The more the senses can be used indifferently for each other, the more our understandings would be enlarged. A rose, jessamine, a pink, a jonquil, and a honeysuckle, might signify the vowels; the consonants to be represented by other flowers. The Cape jessamine, which has two smells, was born a diphthong. How charming it would be to smell an ode from a nosegay, and to scent one's handkerchief with a favourite song! Indeed, many improvements might be made on the Quipos themselves, especially as they might be worn, as well as perused. A trimming set on a new lute-string would be equivalent to a second edition with corrections. I am only surprised that, in a country like Peru, where gold and silver thread were so cheap, there was no *clinquant* introduced into their poetry. In short, madam, I am so pleased with the idea of knotting verses, which is vastly preferable to anagrams and acrostics, that if I were to begin life again, I would use a shuttle, instead of a pen, and write verses

by the yard. As it is, I have not been idle; nay, like any heaven-born genius, I have begun to write before I can read; and, though I have not yet learned to decypher, I can at least cypher like Atahualpa himself. As a proof of my proficience, pray, madam, construe the following colours :—

Brown, blue, white, yellow green yellow yellow white, red brown brown blue white.

As I was writing this last line, I received your ladyship's interpretation of the verses. Whoever made them they are excellent, and it would have been cruel to deprive me of them, till I could have unravelled them. Pray tell me who made them, for they are really good and sterling. I am sorry I expressed myself so awkwardly that you thought I disapproved of the Quipos. On the contrary, you see how much they have amused me. In good truth, I was glad of anything that would occupy me, and turn my attention from all the horrors one hears or apprehends. I am sorry I have read the devastation of Barbadoes and Jamaica, &c., &c.; when one can do no good, can neither prevent nor redress, nor has any personal share, by one's self or one's friends, is it not excusable to steep one's attention in anything? I fear, madam, you and Lord Ossory have a suffering friend! poor Mr. James, I hear, is totally ruined—his whole property swept away! There is another dreadful history, less known: the expedition sent against the Spanish settlement is cut off by the climate, and not a single being is left alive. The

Duchess of Bedford told me last night that the poor soldiers were so averse, that they were driven to the march by the point of the bayonet, and that, besides the men, twenty-five officers have perished.

Lord Cornwallis and his tiny army are scarce in a more prosperous way. On this dismal canvas a fourth war is embroidered; and what, I think, threatens still more, the French administration is changed and likely to be composed of more active men, and much more hostile to England. Our ruin seems to me inevitable. Nay, I know those who smile in the drawing-room, that groan by their fire-side: they own we have no more men to send to America, and think our credit almost as nearly exhausted. Can you wonder, then, madam, if I am glad to play with Quipos—Oh, no! nor can I be sorry to be on the verge—does one wish to live to weep over the ruins of Carthage?

LETTER CXCII.

Jan. 9, 1781.

YOUR ladyship takes so kind a part in all that concerns me, that, though I could not have told you how thunderstruck I was yesterday with news of the loss of Jersey, and alarmed for General Conway, who was but two hours in town, and had not time to see me, and set out with a broken arm not quite recovered, yet I must communicate the sudden transition to joy, and relief from the worst part of my alarm. The troops in

Jersey made a stand, gained a complete victory, and took all the remaining French that had landed, prisoners. Mr. Conway, I conclude, will proceed, and thank his little army, who, without detracting from their merit, certainly owe some of it to his discipline — well, madam, *je respire!* These rapid revulsions are a little too much for such harassed nerves as mine—but you forbid me—and I am silent.

I received two packets from your ladyship last night, and at almost any other moment should have enjoyed them. I can now go over them again, and with pleasure, except the article of Miss Vernon. Your picture of her is very alarming—I tremble for your ladyship, and for her brothers and sisters!—but alarms of every kind will be the lot of all that have any feeling for some time; and even hearts of rock will groan at last, for gold lies in the hearts of those rocks, and is as sensitive as the most shattered nerves. Nor will ducal coronets or portraits of Lord and Lady Spencer console them, if the mines of ore and diamonds are swept away. I had not heard that anecdote of Cunningham. It is one of those traits, that whatever is said of comedy, nay, of the exaggeration of farce, would be too strong for the stage. The bombast passion of a lover in a romance might be carried to such an excess; but a governor writing on the ruins of a whole island levelled by the most fatal of all hurricanes, that his chief misery was the loss of—what?—his bracelets with the portraits of his idols—who would dare to bring such a revolting hyperbole on the stage?

Excuse me, madam, but I do believe there is a great flaw in my memory; I cannot recollect what you allude to by *pigs*. Pray tell me, and which you have not done, the author or authoress of the verses on the Quipos. The explication of mine is, if I cyphered it right, *je vous aime*. Perhaps I ought to have told you it was French.

Somebody knocks, I must finish; but it is not necessary to make excuses for short letters, when I so often send you such long ones. It was Mr. Cambridge to ask news of Jersey, and to trumpet a victory of Carleton the Lord knows where, at t'other end of the world; I neither satisfied his curiosity, nor listened to his gazette.

P.S. Mr. Craufurd has called on me, too, and tells me Mr. James's loss will be but about 15,000*l*., and that he can bear it; but the Storers are totally undone, and so George Selwyn says too. I pity them! I forgot to tell your ladyship that I met Mrs. Montagu t'other night at a visit. She said she had been alone the whole preceding day, *quite hermetically sealed*—I was very glad she was uncorked, or I might have missed that piece of learned nonsense!

LETTER CXCIII.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 14, 1781.

I BEG we may correspond no more in Peruvian, madam, for it would take less time to send our letters

to Lima to be interpreted, than to decypher three words. I return the alphabet, and humbly hope you had forgotten your A B C, for the words as I read them are, *on vous aimons*, which so good a grammarian as your ladyship could not have written, if you remembered your colours; unless, which is much more probable, I have not expounded them rightly, for I certainly have no genius for so brocaded a language, which is like a piece of silk, all confusion, till it is unfolded. I will tell you what is of more importance. I asked the Duchess of Bedford t'other night at Princess Amelie's how she found Miss Vernon? "Oh," said she, "I never saw her look so pretty; the journey had given her a charming colour." Dr. Warren was with her three times yesterday, and says, "if she does not go to three assemblies in an evening, she will be very well." In truth, I do not much depend on this account; the glow might be hectic, and three visits in one day did not sound well; and, besides, her grace is apt to see everything *couleur de rose*, still I think your own tenderness made you think her worse than she may be—I hope so.

You have seen Mr. Fox's combat with highwaymen in the papers; at first I concluded they were not highwaymen, but Highlanders, and that Messrs. Adam and Fullerton were ambitious of farther preferment.

I know nothing farther of Jersey, so contrary is the wind; nor anything else, but that Lord Carlisle is laid up with the gout.

Your ladyship's history of Mr. Whitbread the brewer

and his insolent wealth, came very *à propos* to what the princess said t'other night. She was talking of the crew of Irish peers, and said to the Duchess of Bedford, "I would not give a straw to be a peer in this country—no, give me a good brewhouse; *that* is what makes one considerable here." I doubt, if we brew as we bake, nothing will make us considerable long!

May not I ask, madam, if you do not begin to think of London? Shall not Lady Anne learn of Vestris, while you have a shilling left? Pray let her be fit to make a courtesy like a christian, in case the French should land. You will really keep her and yourself in the country till you will feel for your friends that are undone by hurricanes, or till you lament the war with Holland, though you might have a share in a privateer, and though John St. John has a contract for furnishing us with play-thing coaches, that are neater than the Dutch ones, and as cheap as Mr. Atkinson's rum. Do but come to town, and you will not have a fear or a care left. The serene house of Brudenel will steep your senses and feelings in a delicious lethargy, and you will see everything through an eternal mist, as the Scotch do, and which they call second sight, not having the first gift of sight, which is to see things as they are.

I was much diverted with your setting Mrs. Montagu on her head, which indeed she does herself without the help of Hermes. She is one of my principal entertainments at Mrs. Vesey's, who collects all the graduates and candidates for fame, where they vie

with one another, till they are as unintelligible as the good folks at Babel. I am again interrupted—all one's letters, one's time, one's occupations are cracked by alarms! Colonel Conway is just arrived; his uncle and he were overtaken, nay, sailed in a tempest; they saw a transport with sixty poor men perish, and fear the cutter, that preceded to notify their arriving to Jersey, is lost. The Emerald was tossed for two days and nights, and General Conway's broken arm was hurt; Captain Marshal, a stout sailor, gave them up, the sailors were lashed, or could not stand to their work; the wind changed providentially, or they were lost on the rocks, and carried them to Plymouth, where the Conways landed: Colonel Conway found his wife miscarrying. Oh! I could fill my paper with distresses; but the Parliament will meet in two or three days, and vote that we are all felicity and glory! General Conway is stopped at Park Place to cure his bruises, as his island is safe—I have not time to say more.

Monday.

Colonel Conway was with me an hour this morning, and has given me such an account of their voyage, as makes me shudder; and I have since received a note from Lady Ailesbury, to tell me her husband is in bed with the rheumatism and fatigue, but I fear with his arm, for his nephew says it was very painful to him, though neither the pain nor their peril made the smallest impression on his calmness, which astonished even his nephew, who knows him. Thank

God he is alive! It is a time to feel any blessing to one's-self, when so many are in anguish!

LETTER CXCIV.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 25, 1781.

You know I never pretend to continue my gazette, madam, when Lord Ossory is in town. I can only send the dried skin of news, and he can give you the marrow. He was so good as to sit with me two hours yesterday morning.

I certainly do love, and have for forty years loved General Conway as my dearest friend, and consequently am very uneasy about him. He is extremely out of order still; and had I not been deceived about him on his return, and if I did not every day expect him to be brought to town, I should have gone to him. I am now waiting for the post, which I hope will bring me a more satisfactory account.

My gaming losses, madam, have been trifling, and my luck, as usual, fluctuating, so as to make very little difference. Still I do not decline the purse, which I shall value, though it should not have an enriching virtue.

I have seen Vestris, and remain in my senses.

LETTER CXCV.

Berkeley Square. Jan. 31, at night, 1781.

It is not to save myself, I assure your ladyship, that I decline writing when Lord Ossory is in town. I do write when he is not, because I am aware that any intelligence, that is not quite bad, and that takes care not to be false, is acceptable in the country. But when our lord is here, and hears all that passes in Parliament, and at Brookes's, how chilled must sound the little that I learn in my own room, or in the small circle to which my acquaintance is reduced, or to which I have reduced it! I go little into the fashionable world, and less among politicians of either side; and to no public places: and of the young world, except of my own family, I determine to know nothing; or, if I cannot help it, to say nothing. One of the *reigning* topics (I have improperly used almost a treasonable word), is the Prince of Wales. With him I am positive never to occupy myself. I kissed the hand of his great great grandfather; would not it be preposterous to tap a volume of future history, of which I can never see but the first pages? I am sensible that those persons are happier, who do not feel what is improper for their age; but having always had a horror for juvenile ancientry, I will not make an exception in my own favour; nor should have any comfort in it. It is an absurd saying, that none know themselves; what the deuce then do they know? Do

they think they bound, when they totter, or mistake wrinkles for beauty, and want of memory for thoughtlessness?

I have had another cause of silence, too, madam; I have been at Park Place to see General Conway. I suspected he was worse than I was told, and found he had been much worse than I suspected. He still has fever, and still rheumatism; his hands are swelled, and his face and legs emaciated; nor has he yet been out of his bedchamber. In short, he is much broken, and I doubt will be long before he recovers his strength. I came back but to-day to attend the princess, and know absolutely nothing. I believe there is nothing new, for the Duchess of Bedford was there. Oh! yes, Captain Waldegrave has taken some rich Dutch prizes, for which I am very glad, as I like him much, and his cousins love him extremely.

Thank your ladyship for the account of Sir Walter Raleigh's and his wife's pictures, but I shall not meddle with them. I have neither room nor money for more purchases. The stocks are so terribly fallen, that what trifles I had saved *from myself* for others, would not now pay the legacies I have given; and I must endeavour, if I live, to hoard the deficiency. This is an uncomfortable reflection, but who that reflects, has not some such to make? The nation, like a great boy, does not allow itself a moment's thought. It engages every day to support new wars, though it cannot manage one of them; ere long, to use the sublime nonsense of a secretary of state, *it will be*

stunnèd into its senses; but what good will its senses do then? This was a letter of obedience, but, I fear, ill-conducted to enliven your solitude.

LETTER CXCVI.

Strawberry Hill, June 13, 1781.

THE beauty-room, madam, is the yellow bed-chamber hung with Jarvis's small copies of Sir Peter Lely's beauties, which chamber is on the ground-floor here, next to the little parlour. I placed your screen their *pour cause,* and because it accords with the chimney-piece, which is black and yellow. Had it inhabited the blue room, in which I chiefly live, it would not have lasted even *my time.* In Berkeley-square it would have looked as if in disgrace and in exile; just as French Ministers, when under a cloud, feel miserable, though suffered to dwell in Paris itself, if not permitted into the heaven of heavens Versailles.

Mr. Storer has just left me; I have shewed him such hosts of portraits of the dead, that if he retains their names, he would make a good Vice Chamberlain to Proserpine on a *birth-night,* if there was any such *fête* in the shades below; but as ceremonies are of the essence of all courts, I suppose there they keep death-nights, and then he will be more at home in a ball-room than even Lord Brudenel.

I direct this to Grosvenor Place, for though you named to-day for your leaving town, nobody sets out

at the time they intended. I shall be obliged to go thither oftener than I wish. When your ladyship found me at the Grove, it was to inform Mr. Morrice that Lord Orford has named me and Mr. Skrine to be referees with him to compromise my lord's claims on Cav. Mozzi for money due from my lord's mother. I do not admire the pursuit of that claim, and tried to avoid being employed in it; but, though cast off when I am of no use, they come to me when any drudgery is to be done.

I have been reading a book as heterogeneous from my pursuits as Mr. Storer's new profession from his—Mr. Beckford's on Hunting; and as I always reckon that any book pays me in which I find *one* passage that pleases me or tells me something new (I mean that I care to learn, for as to novelty, every book of science could tell me what I don't know), I found one jewel in Mr. Beckford's, for which I would have perused a folio. His huntsman christened one of his hounds, *Lyman*. "Lyman!" said the squire; "why, James, what does *Lyman* mean?" "Lord, sir," said James, "what does *anything* mean?" I am transported with James's good sense and philosophy. It comforts me for all the books of science which I do not understand, and is an answer to all the pretended knowledge upon earth, and if Mr. Beckford were a classic (as he will be one to those *who know of none*), I would change my motto of *Fari quæ sentiat* for, *What does anything mean?* as more expressive of *quæ sentio*. I have gone through Sir R. Worsley's "Isle of Wight," which is in

my own way, and yet, alas! I did not find *one* diamond in that dunghill—no, James for my money!

LETTER CXCVII.

Strawberry Hill, June 20, 1781.

I SHALL not be able to wait on your ladyship yet, for my niece Lady Maria, who has had a bad cold that has turned to a cough, is coming to me for the air. I expect Mr. Mason, too, who has long promised me a visit. If unengaged, I should be very glad to meet the company you propose to me; not that I want additional allurements to Ampthill.

It is not common for me, madam, to send you news from court, or to contradict what is said to be transacting there; but for once I will be important—only because I have nothing more insignificant to tell you. Be assured, therefore, that the emperor is not going to marry the princess royal. I have been at the Pavilions this evening with the duke and duchess: his royal highness is already returned from his extempore jaunt to Brussels, and has *not* settled the marriage-articles. If his highness has retained Cæsar in our pay, like his ancestor Maximilian, it is more than I am at liberty to disclose. I dare go no further than to advise you not to buy into the stocks upon that presumption. Mr. Wraxall may be more explicit, even in the House of Commons, though he knows no more of it than I do. However, I should not like to be thought totally ig-

norant, as I observe the depth of politics in the present times is to seem to know the contrary of all that is true—yet why should I affect more honours than I enjoy? Do not they seek me in my humble cell? Do not I want all my philosophy to combat the fumes of pride?—In a word, Princess Sophia has invited Tonton to the pavilions; and will it be believed, I have consented to carry him? How weak is mortal man! That *I* should live to let my dog be a courtier! I do not know how others feel on such occasions, but for my part I cannot act this renegade part with *an unembarrassed countenance.* I tremble lest Mr. Fox should write a note to record my fall in my royal and noble authors, where my Whiggism is the most apparent. My father is reported to have said that every man has his price. You see, madam, my dog was *my* vulnerable part. I have resisted bribes for myself—I was not proof against honours for Tonton. Do not give me quite up, dear lady. Make it your own case; if Prince Octavius was to offer Lady Gertrude his hand and his rattle, could you find in your heart to refuse your consent? I will quit this tender subject, and tell you an anecdote, that you will have as much difficulty to believe as if it was in the "Gazette."

A few evenings ago I was invited by the old Lady Fitzwilliam at Richmond to see some pictures and Japan that were her father's, Sir Matthew Decker. I asked her if she had ever happened to hear a ridiculous story that I had been told in my youth, and which I concluded had only been a joke. It was, that

Sir John Germaine, Lady Betty's husband, had been so exceedingly ignorant that he believed his countryman, Sir Matthew (they were both Dutch) was author of "St. Matthew's Gospel." She replied directly, "it is so true, that Sir John had thence conceived such a reverence for my father's piety, that he left him 200*l.* to be distributed amongst poor Dutch?" Now, madam, what story is improbable after this? Nor is it possible to add anything after it.

LETTER CXCVIII.

Strawberry Hill, July 4, 1781.

I EVERY day grow too wary, madam, to dip myself in promises of visits at the least distance of place or time, and expect to make few more, so little I can depend on my health, though for the last six months it has been very flourishing; but at present it has pulled me by the sleeve, or rather by the knee, where I have got the rheumatism by putting on thinner stockings on sultry Saturday, and sauntering in the dew till between nine and ten. I thought it would have obliged me to receive on my couch a stately visit yesterday from the upright Dowager of Beaufort and Lady Betty Compton, who breakfasted with me; and as everybody is a candidate for the latter's hand, it would have been mortifying to be lame when I had so fair an opportunity of entering the lists. However, I made shift to go through every room of the house, and should not

have despaired, if, unluckily, Lady Hertford had not proposed to go to the chapel in the garden, which reduced me to use my stick, and I doubt left the prize still to be contended for by Lord George Cavendish, Lord Fairford, and my great nephew, Cholmondeley, who, I hear, t'other day forgot himself, and squeezed the mother's hand instead of the daughter's. Oh! what consequences might have ensued, had such a fit of absence seized him with another Duchess Dowager of *B!*

My niece left me last night quite recovered. Her sisters fetched her away; Captain Waldegrave came to us the evening before and returned with them. He is fallen away, and shews how hard his service has been. In short, all one sees and hears from the Return is a tale of distresses beyond belief! T'other day I was told of a letter from an officer in the *victorious* army of the conqueror Cornwallis, which said,—"I expect to date my next from the prison at Boston!"

Did your ladyship hear of a Prince Sulkowski, who was lately in England? He was competitor with the present king for the crown of Poland, is hideous, and covered with brilliants. George Selwyn said he had never before seen a monster set in diamonds. This opulent Palatine came about a fortnight ago, with his *reine manquée* to see Strawberry, and was admitted without a ticket, as all foreigners are. I was not here; he left a card with all his titles, as Prince of Thiski, Duke of Thatski, &c., to thank me in the name of all Europe for the free ingress of strangers. It seems the

part of his revenues in specie (for it would be cumbersome to a give handful of peasants to every housekeeper) is rigidly economic (unless you reckon the list of titles on his cards); on Margaret he bestowed four and sixpence, having appropriated but five shillings to this visit, of which, prudently reflecting that he might be overturned or lose a wheel, he retained one sixpence; however, being asked, like the Duchess of Beaufort, to visit the chapel, he surmounted his sage reserve, and generously conferred that sixpence on the gardener!

> The Crown of Poland, venal twice an age,
> To just three millions stinted modest Gage.

I suppose it is cheaper since the partition.

I do not in the least know who Perlin was that wrote travels, of which it is necessary to unriddle the names. Pray tell me who he was, and as I suppose he lived ages ago, what he expended on *concierges*. Lord Ossory shall certainly have Hentzner,* and as soon as he pleases, if your ladyship will tell me how to send him.

Do not be afraid, you shall not be plagued with Tonton, though I assure you he has a very decent privy purse for his travels; but I recollect that my uncle Horace used to say that Mademoiselle Furniture does not love dogs; which makes me allow Tonton handsomely, that he may silence such tattling housekeepers as Margaret.

* Paul Hentzner's Journey in England in the year 1598, now in my possession, printed at Strawberry Hill.—Ed.

LETTER CXCIX.

Strawberry Hill, July 7, 1781.

You must be, or will be, tired of my letters, madam, every one is a contradiction to the last; there is alternately a layer of complaints, and a layer of foolish spirits. To-day the wind is again in the dolorous corner. For these four days I have been confined with a pain and swelling in my face. The apothecary says it is owing to the long drought; but as I should not eat grass were there ever such plenty, and as my cows, though starving, have no swelled cheeks, I do not believe him. I humbly attribute my frequent disorders to my longevity, and to that Proteus the gout, who is not the less himself for being incog. Excuses I have worn out, and, therefore, will not make any for not obeying your kind invitation again to Ampt-hill. I can only say, I go nowhere, even where Tonton is invited—except to balls—and yet though I am the last Vestris that has appeared, Mrs. Hobart did not invite me to her *sans souci* last week, though she had all my other juvenile contemporaries, Lady Berkeley, Lady Fitzroy, Lady Margaret Compton, and Mrs. French, &c. Perhaps you do not know that the lady of the *fête*, having made as many conquests as the King of Prussia, has borrowed the name of that hero's villa for her hut on Ham Common, where she has built two large rooms of timber under a cabbage. Her field officers, General French, General Compton,

&c., were sweltered in the ball-room, and then frozen at supper in tents on the grass. She herself, as intrepid as King Frederic, led the ball, though dying of the toothache, which she had endeavoured to drown in laudanum; but she has kept her bed ever since the campaign ended.

This is all I know in the world, for the war seems to have taken laudanum too, and to keep its bed.

I have received a letter to-day from Sir Horace Mann, who tells me the great duke has been making *wondrous improvements* at Florence. He has made a passage through the tribune, and built a brave new French room of stucco in white and gold, and placed the Niobe in it; but as everybody is tired of her telling her old story, she and all the Master and Miss Niobes are orderly disposed round the chamber, and if anybody asks who they are, I suppose they answer, Francis Charles Ferdinand Ignatius Neopomucenus, or Maria Theresa Christina Beatrice, &c. Well, madam, have I any cause to sigh that the pictures at Houghton are transported to the North Pole, if the Tribune at Florence is demolished by Vandals, and Niobe and her progeny dance a *cotillon?* O sublunary grandeur, short-lived as a butter-fly! We smile at a clown who graves the initials of his name or the shape of his shoe on the leads of a church, in hopes of being remembered, and yet he is as much known as king I don't know whom, who built the Pyramids to eternize his memory. Methinks Anacreon was the only sensible philosopher. If I loved wine, and should look well in a chaplet of

roses, I would crown myself with flowers, and go drunk to bed every night *sans souci.*

LETTER CC.

Strawberry Hill, July 17, 1781.

I DID not mean, madam, that I should be confined *to London* till Lord Orford's business is settled; if I did say so, I expressed myself ill, as I wrote in a great hurry. On the contrary, as Mr. Morrice is so much nearer to me, I believe our meetings will be at the Grove, unless when necessary to go to town to see the lawyers, who have not yet given in the respective claims for which we are waiting. Cavalier Mozzi has complained so much of delays, that I did not care to be out of the way and have any imputed to me. Indeed, at present, it is impossible for me to stir; Lady Ailesbury comes to me to-morrow, and I am still so lame with my rheumatism, that it is near three weeks that I have not been round my own garden. Your ladyship and Lord Ossory are very kind to think on me, but I am grown such old lumber, as to be fit for nothing but a garret. Were I as young as my brother, who is eleven years older, I might be amusing. I sat in admiration of his spirits and humour for two hours the other night, when I was scarce able to open my lips. He described having been to see his new house at Isleworth, after not having been out of his own doors since April twelvemonth. He said he was so surprised

himself, that he could not believe he was there, and asked who *that* was, and that they assured him it was he himself. For my part, I shall sooner take myself for nobody, than for anybody else; perhaps when I am a ghost, I shall take myself for something, and *walk* at Ampthill, and even Lady Gertrude will not be frightened, as I shall be very little less than I am.

LETTER CCI.

Strawberry Hill, July 25, 1781.

Poor human nature, what a contradiction it is! to-day it is all rheumatism and morality, and sits with a death's head before it: tomorrow it is dancing!—Oh! my lady, my lady, what will you say, when the next thing you hear of me after my last letter is, that I have danced three country-dances with a whole set, forty years younger than myself! Shall not you think I have been chopped to shreds and boiled in Medea's kettle? Shall not you expect to see a print of Vestris teaching me?—and Lord Brudenell dying with envy? You may stare with all your expressive eyes, yet the fact is true. Danced—I do not absolutely say, *danced*—but I swam down three dances very gracefully, with the air that was so much in fashion after the battle of Oudenarde, and that was still taught when I was fifteen, and that I remember General Churchill practising before a glass in a gouty shoe.

To be sure you die with impatience to know the

particulars. You must know then—for all my revels must out—I not only went five miles to Lady Aylesford's ball last Friday, but my nieces the Waldegraves, desired me there to let them come to me for a few days, as they had been disappointed about a visit they were to make at another place; but that is neither here nor there. Well, here they are, and last night we went to Lady Hertford at Ditton. Soon after, Lady North and her daughters arrived, and besides Lady Elizabeth and Lady Bel Conways, there were their brothers Hugh and George. All the *jeunesse* strolled about the garden. We ancients, with the Earl and Colonel Keene, retired from the dew into the drawing-room. Soon after the two youths and seven nymphs came in, and shut the door of the hall. In a moment we heard a burst of laughter, and thought we distinguished something like the scraping of a fiddle. My curiosity was raised, I opened the door and found four couples and a half standing up, and a miserable violin from the ale-house. Oh, said I, Lady Bel shall not want a partner; I threw away my stick, and *me voilà dansant comme un charme!* At the end of the third dance, Lord North and his son, in boots, arrived. Come, said I, my lord, you may dance, if I have—but it ended in my *resigning my place* to his son.

Lady North has invited us for to-morrow, and I shall reserve the rest of my letter for the second volume of my regeneration; however, I declare I will not *dance.* I will not make myself too cheap; I should have the Prince of Wales sending for me three or four

times a week to hops in Eastcheap. As it is, I feel I shall have some difficulty to return to my old dowagers, at the Duchess of Montrose's, and shall be humming the Hempdressers; when they are scolding me for playing in flush.

Friday, the 27th.

I AM not only a prophet, but have more command of my passions than such impetuous gentry as prophets are apt to have. We found the fiddles as I foretold; and yet I kept my resolution and did *not* dance, though the Syrens invited me, and though it would have shocked the dignity of old Tiffany Ellis, who would have thought it an indecorum. The two younger Norths and Sir Ralph Payne supplied my place. I played at cribbage with the matrons, and we came away at midnight. So if I now and then do cut a colt's tooth, I have it drawn immediately. I do not know a paragraph of news—the nearer the minister, the farther from politics.

P. S. My next jubilee dancing shall be with Lady Gertrude.

LETTER CCII.

Strawberry Hill, Sep. 4, 1781.

I AM sorry your ladyship is so like Dr. Johnson as not to understand the Grecian graces of odes, but to require them to be indited in as Dunstable prose as a bill in Chancery. Do you think as he does, that prose only should be encumbered with learning and a hash

of languages, and that poetry should be as plain as the horn-book? I believe I could expound all your ladyship's difficulties in Mr. Jones's ode if you had specified them. *Curled smiles*, the sole instance you produce, is not so beautiful as the next expression, *the bubbling tear;* but is very intelligible to any one who has seen an angel of Correggio, whose mouth is generally curled into a crescent, and in truth I think strains grace into almost a grimace. The clan of Howes would certainly have been more profuse on the transcendent qualities of their sovereign lady; but I believe Mr. Jones is not so zealous an idolater at that shrine. However, if the ode is not perfect, still the eighth, ninth, and tenth stanzas have merit enough to shock Dr. Johnson and such sycophant old nurses, and that is enough for me. How precious is any line of Demosthenes that offended King Philip and the whole Court of Macedon!

Your other question, madam, of who was Lady Elizabeth *Thimbleby*, I cannot so well resolve: I only guess that she was no relation of that Maid of Honour of Queen Elizabeth, who died by pricking her finger with a needle.

The library I have read. There are some pretty lines and easy verses; but it is too long. One thought is charming, *that a dog, though a flatterer, is still a friend.* It made me give Tonton a warm kiss, and swear it was true.

I have heard of Lady Derby's imperial conquest; nor should I wonder if her mother was immediately to transport her own rags of beauty to Vienna, since

there is a monarch that can take up with remnants of charms, that indeed never were very charming.

I direct this to Ampthill, as you name no day for quitting it; yet if you have any remains of fever, you cannot change the air too soon. I have had a letter from Mr. Morrice, who tells me that he has received some of our judicial papers, but cannot open them, as he has been confined to his bed ten days by the gout. I should have said that it was only a note by another hand. Mine still writes with difficulty, though almost well; but having replied to your ladyship's queries, and having nothing new to tell you, it shall take its leave.

LETTER CCIII.

Wednesday night, Sept. 12, 1781.

I WOULD not answer your last, madam, till I could tell you something on better authority than my own—yet that something is but another's conjecture. I have been at Ditton this evening, where Lord Hertford told me that he thinks the combined fleets are retired. A neutral ship has met them sailing westward; and it is hoped they have suffered by a storm—this is war! One sits at home coolly *hoping* that five or six vessels full of many hundreds of men are gone to the bottom of the deep! Can one look back on the last six years and not shudder at the devastation deliberate love of power has committed—to the utter loss of power! The fleets have been seen off Kingsale; but Lord H. could not be

easy if he expected any attempt upon Ireland. He flatters himself the Czarina will make peace for us, but she must first make us make peace. As to any landing here, it has not been apprehended. The enemies have no transports with them; but indeed we have no intelligence neither. They have landed on Minorca, and General Murray's wife and family, with other Englishwomen, have escaped to Leghorn. It must have been a shocking separation! There is little chance, I believe, of the islands being saved. We shall be pared to the quick, while we are dreaming of recovering America; we might as sensibly pursue our claim to the crown of France. Have you seen this epigram, which, for aught I know, may have been in the newspapers?

> Oh England, no wonder your troubles begin,
> When blockaded without, and blockheaded within.

I am glad I have been a physical prophet, madam, and that change of air has cured your fever.

I have met Miss Lloyd at Lady Di.'s. She is superlatively inflated with the odours that flowed from the emperor on her and Lady Clermont. "We sat round him, and he put us quite at our ease." He would not have put me so, said I; I have seen a good deal of princes in my day, and always found, that if they put themselves at their ease, they did not at all like that I should put myself so. I demurred too to the great admiration; I remember when the Lady Clermonts of that time wept for the departure of the Duke of Lorrain, the late emperor, and yet he proved an oaf.

This man announces too much; we shall see. Then came the archduchess, and then Duke Albert. "You know he is to be inaugurated four times." God forbid I should know it, said I. I should be sorry to know how often a German prince is to go through a ceremony. The Duke of Richmond told me a much better story, a sequel to the Duchess of Chandos's history, which you have heard, how she proposed the princess-royal to the emperor. Mr. Fitzherbert told her he had heard of a great marriage on foot. Her grace was mysterious—what match? He told her. "Why, surely," replied she, "the emperor has not divulged it yet! I really beg your pardon, Mr. Fitzherbert, for interfering in your province, but I will make you all the amends I can: I shall certainly be appointed to conduct the princess to Vienna, and I will ask for you to accompany us."

I have at last received all (I shall ever have) of Madame du Deffand's papers. *All*, I know, there are not, for I miss some; but there are some very curious, and some of her own dear writing, admirable.

I have made some purchases, too, at Mr. Sheldon's, very cheap indeed, and shall go to town on Friday to see them. I have made a gold-fishpond, too; in short, I am as busy and trifling as if I were still lord of the ocean: I do not know, but I may soon go a-hunting in a white hat lined with green. Your ladyship, I suppose, goes a-shooting, in the absence of Lord Ossory, lest the pheasants and partridges should think you are alarmed. It is the modern way; we souse

into diversions to conceal our panics. All the watering-places are thronged; one would think this was the most unhealthy country in Europe. On the contrary, this proves it is the most healthy, for nineteen go to amuse themselves, for one that goes for illness. Mercy on us! how we shall stare, if ever we come to our senses again!

P.S. Lady Mary Coke has had an hundred distresses abroad, that do not weigh a silver penny altogether. She is like Don Quixote, who went in search of adventures, and when he found none imagined them. She went to Brussels, to see the archduchess, but either had bad intelligence or the archduchess very good, for she was gone when Lady Mary arrived; so was the packet-boat at Ostend, which she believes was sent away on purpose, by a codicil in the empress queen's will.

You must get some standard pomegranates, madam. I have one now in this room, above five feet high, in a pot, in full blow. At Paris, they mix them with their orange-trees.

LETTER CCIV.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 7, 1781.

I BEG your ladyship's pardon for not returning the history of Fotheringay, which I now enclose.

The new Veres have been returned to England these six weeks, and I visited them at their palace (as it

really was of Henry VIII.) at Hanworth not long after their arrival. All their near kin have done so too, and *tout s'est passé comme si de rien n'étoit.* Their fellow-traveller is left behind. We live in such an awkward unfashionable nook here, that we have not yet heard Lord Vere's will, nor know whether Lord Richard Cavendish is dead or alive. *I* am so much awkwarder still, and treasure up scandal so little, that, though I heard the Brighthelmstone story, I have quite forgotten who the principal personage was—so you will not fear my repeating it. I do not design to know a circumstance about Admiral Rodney and Admiral Ferguson. We are to appearance at war with half Europe and a quarter of America, and yet our warfare is only fending and proving, and is fitter for the Quarter Sessions than for history. It costs us seventeen or eighteen millions a-year to inquire whether our generals and admirals are rogues or fools, and, since most of them are only one or t'other, I would not give half a crown to know which. The nation is such an oaf as to amuse itself with these foolish discussions, and does not perceive that six years and above forty millions, and half our territories, have been thrown away in such idle pastime. How the grim heroes of Edward III. and Henry V. would stare at hearing that this is our way of making war on France!

The night I had the honour of writing to your ladyship last, I was robbed—and, as if I were a sovereign or a nation, have had a discussion ever since whether it was

not a *neighbour* who robbed me—and should it come to the ears of the newspapers, it might produce as ingenious a controversy amongst our anonymous wits as any of the noble topics I have been mentioning. *Voici le fait.* Lady Browne and I were, as usual, going to the Duchess of Montrose at seven o'clock. The evening was very dark. In the close lane under her park-pale, and within twenty yards of the gate, a black figure on horseback pushed by between the chaise and the hedge on my side. I suspected it was a highwayman, and so I found did Lady Browne, for she was speaking and stopped. To divert her fears, I was just going to say, is not that the apothecary going to the duchess? when I heard a voice cry "Stop!" and the figure came back to the chaise. I had the presence of mind, before I let down the glass, to take out my watch and stuff it within my waistcoat under my arm. He said, "Your purses and watches!" I replied, I have no watch. "Then your purse!" I gave it to him; it had nine guineas. It was so dark that I could not see his hand, but felt him take it. He then asked for Lady Browne's purse, and said, "Don't be frightened; I will not hurt you." I said, "No, you wont frighten the lady?" He replied, "No, I give you my word I will do you no hurt." Lady Browne gave him her purse, and was going to add her watch, but he said, "I am much obliged to you; I wish you good night!" pulled off his hat, and rode away. "Well," said I, "Lady Browne, you will not be afraid of being robbed another time, for you see there is nothing in

it." "Oh! but I am," said she, "and now I am in terrors lest he should return, for I have given him a purse with only bad money that I carry on purpose." "He certainly will not open it directly," said I, "and at worst he can only wait for us at our return; but I will send my servant back for a horse and a blunderbuss," which I did. The next distress was not to terrify the duchess, who is so paralytic and nervous. I therefore made Lady Browne go into the parlour, and desired one of the duchess's servants to get her a glass of water, while I went into the drawing-room to break it to the duchess. "Well," said I, laughing to her and the rest of the company, "you won't get much from us to-night." "Why," said one of them, "have you been robbed?" "Yes, a little," said I. The duchess trembled; but it went off. Her groom of the chambers said not a word, but slipped out, and Lady Margaret and Miss Howe having servants there on horseback, he gave them pistols and dispatched them different ways. This was exceedingly clever, for he knew the duchess would not have suffered it, as lately he had detected a man who had robbed her garden, and she would not allow him to take up the fellow. These servants spread the story, and when my footman arrived on foot, he was stopped in the street by the hostler of the "George," who told him the highwayman's horse was then in the stable; but this part I must reserve for the second volume, for I have made this no story so long and so tedious that your ladyship will not be able to read it in a breath; and the second

part is so much longer and so much less, contains so many examinations of witnesses, so many contradictions in the depositions, which I have taken myself, and, I must confess, with such abilities and shrewdness that I have found out nothing at all, that I think to defer the prosecution of my narrative till all the other inquisitions on the anvil are liquidated, lest your ladyship's head, strong as it is, should be confounded, and you should imagine that Rodney or Ferguson was the person who robbed us in Twickenham Lane. I would not have detailed the story at all if you were not in a forest, where it will serve to put you to sleep as well as a newspaper full of lies; and I am sure there is as much dignity in it as in the combined fleet and ours popping in and out alternately, like a man and woman in a weather-house.

LETTER CCV.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 17, 1781.

My story is grown cold, madam, and I am tired of it, and should make nothing of it now. In short, though it has had a codicil, it has ended no how, and is only fit to entertain the village where it happened. The quintessence was that a great corn-factor, who is in bad odour here on the highway, arrived at the "George" a moment after or before our robbery, and was suspected, and my footman thought he could swear to the horse; and then Zoffani, the painter, was

robbed, and his footman was ready to take his bible to the person of a haberdasher, intimate of the corn-factor; but Mr. Smallwares proved an *alibi*, and the corn-factor gave a ball—and none but the dancers acquit him—and so much for an idle story. Your ladyship's idiot was more tremendous than our Corn—way-man.

I am not likely to hear of a place, madam, for your *recommandée*, but will propose her if I should.

I see Graves and Hood have been tolerably beaten; I do not wish Hood unthrashed, but I had rather it was Commodore Johnstone that had met with a drubbing, instead of a rich booty. I read, too, that Lord Cornwallis is trying to house his tattered laurels at New York; and for that I am not much grieved neither. Since we are to be cuffed from one end of Europe to t'other end of America, I am glad when renegades are our representatives. I hope Lord Dunmore is going to have his dose.

I heard at Park-place that the Prince of Wales has lately made a visit to Lady Cecilia Johnstone, where Lady Sarah Napier was. She did not appear, but he insisted on seeing her, and said, "she was to have been there," pointing to Windsor Castle. When she came down, he said he did not wonder at his father's admiring her, and was persuaded she had not been more beautiful then.

Lord Richard Cavendish is indubitably dead, and so I see is Lord Kelly. As this is but a postscript to my last, your ladyship will excuse its brevity.

LETTER CCVI.

Oct. 26, 1781.

In good sooth, madam, I do not know who is the grandmother of Charity, unless it means the present Duke of Montagu, in whose breasts I conclude there is not a drop of the milk of charity left, *vu* the dirt he has discovered in his transactions with Lady Beaulieu, since the death of Tisiphone her sister. Old Marlborough, or old Duchess Montagu could not be that grandmother, unless they may be called the grandames of charity—children, who would willingly have left some of their own children to the parish. The friend who wrote the verses was perhaps Bishop Hurd, or Lord Brudenel, or Lady Greenwich, or one of the King's footmen.

I have heard a very indifferent account of poor Mr. Morrice from Lady Margaret Compton, who says Dr. Turton has a bad opinion of him. He is at Bath, and that delays our consultation on Cav. Mozzi's affair. Of my nephew, I have received just such accounts as Lord Ossory gives. I wish he would fix on his isthmus of Corinth, for the scene of an exploit he has got in that head which all the world finds so sensible. He is going to set up *at Leghorn* a monument for his mother, and has sent me the epitaph for my opinion. It says she died *universally lamented.* Oh! that he would translate it into Greek or Coptic, or any *lingo* that every English sailor could not understand! I have answered very respectfully, as becomes a dutiful uncle, without giving any opinion or advice at all; for to

contradict a madman is to persuade him. If he thinks I approve, he may change his mind.

In the meantime, while Mr. Morrice is incapable of attending our Court, I have been transacting another knotty affair, of which I despaired, but have brought to an amicable hearing. Mr. Jephson's play on my "Otranto," has been committed to my care, on and off, for these twelve months. But he had chosen other guardians too. A lady genius persuaded him to give it to Mr. Sheridan, who having the opera and the nation to regulate besides, and some plays to write, neglected the poor Irish orphan. Then I was desired to recommend it to t'other house. Unfortunately a third guardian was appointed; and, though your Milesians have hearts unsteady as the equator, they have always an ecliptic that crosses their heads, and gives them a devious motion. When I applied to Mr. Manager Harris, it came out that the Hibernian trustee had originally engaged the play to him; and when Mr. Harris complained of the breach of promise, he was not softened by the too zealous friend. There had been twenty other mismanagements, and Mr. Harris would not hear the play named. As I have seen other negotiators of late miscarry by bullying first and bending afterwards, I took the counterpart, and in two days so softened the majesty of Covent-garden, that he has not only engaged to act the tragedy, but by the beginning of December, when my utmost hopes did not expect to see it before spring.

Nor was this my only difficulty. Mrs. Yates is dying,

and the sole remaining actress, Miss Young, refused the part of the mother, because, as she said, Mrs. Crauford had refused it. Mr. Harris begged me to write to Miss Young. I did ; and to turn aside what I guessed to be the real motive of the refusal, I told her I would not suspect that Mrs. Crauford declined the part from preferring that of the daughter, because Mrs. Crauford must know the world too well not to be aware, that when a gentlewoman of middle age appears in a very juvenile part, it does but make that middle age more apparent. There was so much sugar strewed over this indirect truth, that even there I have succeeded too, and Miss Young has complied. I am to attend rehearsals, and give advice on scenes, dresses, &c., and so must be frequently in town. In short, my uncle never negotiated with more abilities. Pray, madam, respect my various talents. I have lately acted as a Justice of Peace ; am to sit as Chancellor in a Court of Equity on my nephew's dispute with Mozzi ; and have now been Plenipotentiary to the Sovereign of a theatre! What pity that I should have cut my abilities so late! Well! thus I unwrinkle my old age with whatever pastime presents itself, instead of growing ill-humoured or covetous, the resources of longevity.

Your ladyship, however, seems to think that I have a good deal of wrongheadedness in my composition. I confess I have not that verbal patriotism which bids one say one wishes what one does not wish. I confess I do wish better to the Americans than to the Scotch, because the cause of the former is more just. The

English in America are as much my countrymen as those born in the parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields; and, when my countrymen quarrel, I think I am free to wish better to the sufferers than to the aggressors. I do look on Lord Cornwallis as a renegade. He was one of five who protested against the Stamp Act. He therefore had no principles *then*, or has none now; and neither in compliance with the vulgar or the powerful, will I say I approve him.

If an alderman's son, not content with a decent fortune and a large portion of well-deserved immortality, is proud of becoming toad-eater to a Scotch Chief Justice, of having a few more words said to him at a levee than are vouchsafed to Dr. Dominiceti, and of being ordered to pen memorials for such boobies as Lord Suffolk and Lord Hilsborough, I do not wonder. But when a gentleman, a man of quality, sells himself for the paltry honours and profits that he must quit so soon, and leave nothing but a tarnished name behind him, he has my utter contempt; nor can I see how my love of my country obliges me to wish well to what I despise. Your ladyship is more charitable, or more patriotic, or perhaps your sentiments may not be so rooted as mine, who do prefer the liberties of mankind to any local circumstances. Were I young and of heroic texture, I would go to America; as I am decrepit, and have the bones of a sparrow, I must die on my perch; and, when you turn courtier, I will peck my bread and water out of another hand.

For France I have no predilection for it; nor is my

respect for it augmented. It does so little, it makes so poor a figure, that one would think Lord North was Minister there as well as here. In truth, madam, I have no platonic passions. I cannot love what I do not esteem. We have forfeited all titles to respect. I appeal to the unalterable nature of justice whether this war with America is a just one? If it is not, can an honest man wish success to it? and I appeal to posterity whether it can find in all our annals so disgraceful a period as the present. You, madam, as a sound patriot, may wish that Admiral Darby with an inferiority of two-thirds had beaten the combined fleets; which he did not attempt to beat: but give me leave to say that you should recur to your piety. Piety believes in miracles; miracles alone can counterpoise superior weight of metal, or counteract folly, which has thrown away the empire of the ocean. It is true, we have still the jaw-bone of an ass left; but somehow or other it has lost its wonder-working efficacy: but come, madam, I will show that I can be impartial too. I do assure you I have not the smallest apprehension from Lord Cornwallis's victorious arms; and I do pray for the duration of the present Ministry, for I am sure they will never conquer America, or any thing else.

I had heard the story of Lady Sarah and the Prince, and know it is true. The spindle-tree I have,—paper enough I have not to reply to other articles in your ladyship's letter. I beg your pardon for the length and tediousness of this, but I could not bear not to

justify myself in your eyes; I have spoken the truth, I do not know whether with any success. My sentiments have always been the same, and I believe firmly will never alter.

LETTER CCVII.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 6, 1781.

I BELIEVE I am very dull, or quite blinded by prejudice, for I confess I do not feel the force of your ladyship's arguments. Are men in the right to take up arms in self-defence, and in the wrong to declare themselves independent? Is resistance *by force* a thing indifferent, and the declaration *in words* a crime? Methinks by that rule all who joined the Prince of Orange were justifiable, but ceased to be so the moment King James was dethroned. Thus men ought to offend a king but never to punish him! I believe their majesties would agree to that compromise.

I can as little subscribe to the position that it is the duty of an officer to obey his king, whatever may be the officer's opinions. Were that maxim true, no conscientious man can accept a commission if it dissolves the obligation of his conscience. Those very loyal instruments, the bells of a parish church, do allow a precedence to God—fear God, honour the King; but I am talking politics and arguing—two things I do not love. I am almost afraid to tell you news on that subject, as I doubt your ladyship is less and less likely to recover your share of sovereignty over America.

Lord Graham and Lord Sefton, who have been in town, tell me that the accounts brought by Colonel Conway are very bad indeed. I did see him himself on Saturday at Ditton on his way to Windsor, but he was so discreet as to say nothing, but that what he brought was not very good: that the French have thirty-seven ships, and we twenty-three; that the former have landed 4000 men, and evacuated Rhode Island, and taken *two* of our best frigates; the papers say *three;* but it is not true that two regiments have been cut to pieces, for the 45th, one of the named, is in England. He did say, that your friend, Lord Cornwallis, has the back country open to him, and he did not add, what Lord Sefton tells me is said, that he had provisions but for six weeks. We shall close, I believe and hope, madam, in wishing an end to this destruction of the species, nor can the most loyal, I suppose, think that even the dependence of America was worth purchasing at the expense of thousands of lives, of forty millions of money, of the sovereignty of the sea, and of the loss of America itself. We were naturally tradesmen, and had better have borne a few affronts than asserted the point of honour at so dear a rate.

It is very far from true, madam, that I write either prologue or epilogue to the Count of Narbonne. I could no more compose twenty verses than I could dance a hornpipe. My faculties are as *délabrées* as my limbs, and these are deplorable. My nerves are so shattered that the clapping of a door makes me tremble; and this poor hand that is writing to you has

long lost the use of three of its joints, and I fear will quite desert me. I have now, and have had all the summer the gout in the fourth finger. Thus my person is as antiquated as my political opinions!

I have not seen Mr. Selwyn for half a century. He has *the mal à propos* almost as strongly as the *à propos*. Others with more malice, say they perceive a likeness to *the* Lord William. Miss Lloyd is full as like to Lady Sarah. Miss Bunbury has a great deal of the Lennoxes, not so handsome, but with a much prettier person than any of the females of the family.

Genealogist as I am, I cannot make out, madam, how Miss Sackville is Lord Mansfield's niece. You say you do not entirely believe that his lordship gave away his niece. *Cela me passe.* To weep at weddings I know is of ancient custom, as much as *double entendres;* a ceremonial, the former, of which I never knew the origin. The more and the longer a fashion prevails, the less sense there commonly is in it. Thence solutionists, like etymologists, seldom hit on the true foundation, both hunting for some meaning.

I recollect how prolix my last was; and though you are too civil to tell me, madam, of that other symptom of my dotage, I am aware of it myself, and wish you good night.

LETTER CCVIII.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 15, 1781.

I DON'T know whether I shall be able to go through a letter, madam, for I have a new swelling on one of my fingers, which must be lanced, and my hand trembles so much that I often cannot write a line. In this uneasy situation I am again come to town to attend a rehearsal. This play, I confess, plagues me a good deal, for our lord's ecliptic countrymen undo as fast as I do. The manager was going to hurry on the performance last Saturday, before actors, scenes, or anything was ripe. I trusted to accidents and bore that haste. I had no sooner done so, than one of your Milesians took fire and wrote an angry letter to Mr. Harris, in resentment of the precipitation. —Well! that quarrel I made up. To-day, after I had begged Mr. Harris to procure an epilogue, and he had got one, Mr. Jephson had written to this Mr. O'Quarrel, who is a poet too, to write one, and so he has; and now, on Thursday night with the play to come forth on Saturday, we don't know which is to be preferred. I am to be at the theatre to-morrow by eleven, and Lord knows what will happen! I will tire your ladyship no more with my grievances, but will take care how I promise and vow for a play again. I want to be quiet in my own Strawberry again—indeed I am fit to be no where else, and have a great mind to fix there.

I heard a great deal of French news t'other day, by one just come from Paris. I don't answer for one syllable being true. My historian says the queen seemed to be resolved, *à la Marie d'Este*, that her babe should be a dauphin. Her reckoning and her person shifted backwards and forwards, and the last time having put off her delivery for a fortnight, and sent the king to hunt, he was fetched back in a quarter of an hour to see a son. Then there is a delightful episode of a Mademoiselle Diane de Polignac, a friend of the favourite duchess, who was dame to Madame Elizabeth, and who was so very pious and had so bemethodized her mistress, that they feared the princess would follow her aunt Louise into a convent, and they would have dismissed the saint, if the queen would have consented, and if the saint herself had not, one *beau matin*, had the misfortune to have a little one. For fear of any more virgin-mothers, the queen and the duchess have produced an old Madame Dandelot, who was exiled in the last reign for having taken a very different way to convert Madame Adelaide, by lending her a strange book, of which I protest I know the name no more than your ladyship. One anecdote more, and I will not ask my hand to say a word more. The Comte d'Artois carried his eldest boy, the Comte d'Angoulême, to see the dauphin. The child said, *il est bien petit.* The prince replied, *patience, mon infant, vous le trouverez bien-tôt trop grand.*

I don't know whether your ladyship can read all this tittle tattle; it does not signify if you do not. I

know nothing else, nor could write more if I did. Soon, mayhap, I must write upon a slate, it will only be scraping my fingers to a point, and they will serve for a chalk pencil.

Friday.

I have been at the theatre, and compromised the affair of the epilogues; one is to be spoken to-morrow, the Friend's on the author's night. I have been tumbling into trap doors, seeing dresses tried on in the green-room, and directing armour in the painting room, and all this with such a throbbing hand, that I was tempted to rest myself in Covent Garden Churchyard, and bilk both the great stage and the little one.

LETTER CCIX.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 22, 1781.

I AM angry with myself, madam, for having dropped a word that gave you any concern; nor shall I forgive my guilty self, though it has produced such new proof of your ladyship's goodness. I have not suffered at all by my campaign at the theatre, but *like weeds that escape the scythe*, I do not catch cold where a giant would. It is true I am so nervous, that the least surprize or sudden noise agitates me from head to foot — but I will not say a word more on my debility. An aspen leaf can give an oak no idea of its sensations — and why should it? I have such a dread of seeming not to be apprized of my antiquity

and decay, that very likely I carry it to affectation, for it is difficult to keep to the medium of simplicity and common sense, on any occasion. Having therefore put in my caveat against being suspected of any imaginary robustness, you shall hear no more of any cracks that happened to the premises.

After all my pains Mr. Jephson is not quite satisfied. Though I had begged him (and he had promised) not to communicate to his Irish friends the approaching exhibition of his tragedy, he had, as I told your ladyship, written to one of them here, who, as I told you too, quarrelled with Mr. Harris and then, I believe, with me, about his epilogue. To punish me, he wrote to Mr. Jephson that I had given up a material point of the decoration of the last scene, and had consented that the statue of Alphonso should be cumbent, though Mr. Jephson had called it *standing*—which by the way was wrong. The truth was, we had not time to remedy that contradiction, unless by altering the word, which Mr. Friend would not allow, nor could we have placed an erect statue in the scene prepared—and if we could, it would have spoiled the great effect of the last scene. In short, Mr. Jephson has written me a pressing letter to amend that disposition, when it is too late. Well! I am content with having brought so beautiful a play on the stage; and as it is never too late to learn, I will take care how I undertake such an office another time.

My sage nephew, Lord Orford, is, I hear, drawing up a code of laws—for coursing; for the use of her

Imperial Majesty of Russia—a fitter code, indeed, for a despot, than a general system of legislation. I hope Diderot and D'Alembert will celebrate her humanity in not allowing poor hares to be hunted to death, but according to law. You see, madam, she has sent her son to travel; shall you be prodigiously surprised if he was to die suddenly by eating ice when he was over-heated?

LETTER CCX.

Tuesday noon, Dec. 18, 1781.

I HEARD our parenthesis of good news too late last night, madam, to give you an inkling of it; and I doubt whether, if we should receive a complete wreath of sea-flags, I shall have time to send you a leaf to-day, as I am to dine with Princess Amelie, and shall not be dismissed before the post departs. As American liberty is safe, I shall like prodigiously to have crushed a quota of the French navy, and shall love Admiral Kempenfeld as much as Lord Sandwich himself can. The East Indian triumph is firmly believed. If we only conquer at t'other end of the world, and lose all our nearer possessions, we shall be like a trapes in the Strand, that one sees with short petticoats and a long train. I will keep my letter open till the coach comes to the door, in hopes of a fortunate express, as I have begged Lady Hertford to send me the earliest news.

I was diverted last night at Lady Lucan's. The

moment I entered she set me down to whist with Lady Bute—and who do you think were the other partners? the Archbishopess of Canterbury and Mr. Gibbon. I once saved Lady Suffolk at the Dowager Essex's from playing at the same table with Lady Yarmouth. I saw Lady Suffolk ready to sink, and took her cards from her, saying, "I know your ladyship hates whist, and I will play instead of you."

If I am too late, should any account come, I conclude Mr. Fitzpatrick will write.

I have been listening impatiently for the Park guns; but it is past two, and they are dumb. I fear their office is almost grown a sinecure, like the Laureate's, who only chants anniversaries, whether glad or sorry!

To divert my impatience, I will tell your ladyship a story that George Selwyn told us t'other day, after dinner, at Lord Hertford's, and you will allow the authority to be very good. When Mr. de Grey became Baron of Walsingham, he felt that so high a rank, and a title so illustrated, could not consort with Commercial Commissioners, he resigned his seat at the Board of Trade. Lord Carlisle obtained it for Storer, who kissed hands, vacated his seat, and was re-elected; but, lo! the great Baron of Walsingham cried, hold! I am above the place, but till I have another as lucrative, I will not relinquish the salary—that is, livery and labour degrade; wages for doing nothing, do not; and so poor Storer has already lost four hundred pounds, because a peer blushes to be in the red-

book below his rank, but not to take another man's pension who works for it! Do not you like, madam, to see a grandee hopping with one foot on the *haut du pavé*, and t'other in the kennel, partie per pale, ermine and mud! It is just four, I must seal my letter, and go.

LETTER CCXI.

Dec. 19, 1781.

THERE! madam, there! one cannot for a moment expect success, but one is in a scrape, and involved in disgrace! Runners come forth in swarms, buzz about one's ears, cry victory! transports taken! an expedition defeated! the West Indies saved! and one is such a driveller as to believe them, and to die with impatience for half a dozen French men-of-war towed into Portsmouth, and as many sunk, with the loss of only a leg or arm to some of one's particular friends; next night comes out a gazette, and coolly tells you, yes, we had taken a few transports, though, somehow or other, we have dropped half a dozen by the way; and as to destroying the enemies' fleet, why, they happened to be an over-match for us, as they had five little vessels of 110 guns each, which had been concealed behind a mole-hill out of sight of any of our cutters; and so we contented ourselves with our day's sport, and hope you will not be much disappointed. Well, but what have you done with the West Indies? Oh! they will go; but you have got

the East Indies in their stead, and sure diamonds and gold are preferable to sugar; and had not you rather our gracious Sovereign was great Mogul, than master of two or three islands almost as small as Mecklenberg? I wish you good-night, madam; I have done with politics, they make me sick!

LETTER CCXII.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 22, 1781.

Your inquiries about Miss Keppel are very kind indeed, madam. Till within these four or five days I was not at all alarmed about her; and thought, from her *embonpoint*, that a cough would be of no consequence; but Mrs. Keppel is so terrified by the many fatal disorders that have carried off almost all the house of Albemarle, that she has frightened me too, and but this morning, by the Duke's command, I proposed to her to carry her daughter abroad, to which she immediately consented, and I believe will, if, upon farther consultation, it is judged right.

In answer to your ladyship's other question, in good truth my serenity is not at all ruffled; nor would it be yet, were it ever likely to be. It would be as ruffleable as a porcupine, had it set up its quill yet, for hitherto I am only reading both Bryant and Milles by deputy. I skimmed the former's second volume, and dipped into one or two pages of the latter, but though I have tough patience at a tedious

book, I doubt I shall never compass all the ancient lore in Mr. Bryant's first volume, and still less its *caput mortuum* in the Dean's. I let Lady Ailesbury carry Bryant to Park Place before I had finished a quarter of what I intend to read, and have lent t'other to a clergyman. Mr. Conway says Mr. Bryant has very nearly convinced him, and he (Bryant) certainly has ingenuity enough to be a formidable adversary, whether one is in the right or in the wrong; yet, where I have looked into him, I thought I saw weak places. However, I am unalterably determined not to write a word more on the subject. I have declared I would not in my defence of myself; and have determined, besides, not to write more on any subject, and least on this, because, having unwillingly taken a part, I must be prejudiced. But, in fact, I look on this controversy, as I do on other problems of faith which can never be cleared up to the satisfaction of everybody; and I do not believe that the salvation of my understanding depends on crediting legends, when it requires so much learning to prove it probable that the supposed author ever existed; and if he did exist, that he was inspired; which Rowley must have been. The corporal evidence I had seen before, and very vague and inconclusive it is; but shall not I be doubly out of luck, madam, if Rowley is pronounced Gospel? I believed in Ossian, who is now tumbled into the Apocrypha; and I doubted of Rowley, who is now to rank with Moses and the prophets!—I doubt I have very bad judgment.

As to Lord Macartney, whom your ladyship describes with the Arabian eloquence of Scheherezade, and with much more wit, when you make him ride on three elephants at once like Astley. I own, since his paltry behaviour to me about Lady Mary Wortley's letters, I take no part in his triumphs, nor care whether he rises in the east or sinks again in the west. He was treacherous to me at the very moment he had been greatly obliged to me. I have not equal faith in Lady Derby's triumphs—yet, as I have been telling you, I had rather believe anything than contest it; and were I to hear that Dr. Hunter was sent to Versailles to make a new treaty of Paris with the Queen's accoucheur (who you say, madam, is made free of the theatre), I would not dispute it—nay, I should rejoice; for, considering how many *miscarriages* we have had, it could not be so scandalous a piece as the last.

LETTER CCXIII.

Christmas Day, 1781.

I ALWAYS answer immediately, madam, if I have time; because, as letters ought to be nothing but extempore conversations upon paper, if the reply is not speedy, the curiosity that prompted the question may be passed before the answer arrives. Nothing, then, can be further from my thoughts than accompanying my niece abroad, if she should go, which is not determined, as her disorder seems to be an inflammation on

her breast, and not a tendency to consumption. For me, who only pendulate from Berkeley Square to Strawberry, and think Ampthill as far as the Antipodes, and who was near dashing my brains out on Saturday night, by missing a step at Mrs. Keppel's door, if David had not caught me in his arms like a baby thrown out of window when a house is on fire, is it possible that I should think myself able to convoy anybody else? Oh! no, madam; nor were I as brawny as Commodore Johnstone, would I set my foot on the continent at present, when every country in Europe, except we ourselves, must be sensible of our shame!

For your ladyship's other question, why I do not publish my letter on Chatterton? what, because I don't know who in the newspaper wants to see it! My resolution must be light as gossamer if such a breath could make them waver. I flattered myself that you knew me enough to be sure that when I have once made a resolution, it is not the easiest thing in the world to shake it: much less such an idle controversy as, whether Rowley or Chatterton was Rowley, which is as indifferent to me as who is churchwarden of St. Martin's parish. And how can I care now what is thought about it? When I have outlived all the principles and maxims purchased for us *by the noble army of Martyrs*, and when there is nothing so foolish and absurd that is not believed and adopted, what matters whether Ossian, or Rowley, or Mother Goose's Tales are canonized as classics? Thank my natal stars I was born in a better age, and had much rather be what I

was, an author of a very inferior class twenty years ago, than the brightest luminary that is bound in Morocco and gold, and presented to the library in the Park at this disastrous era—to be elbowed by Scotch Metaphysics, and led out of my senses by Scotch historians; and not get a wink of sleep on my shelf, though a forgotten author, from hearing Dr. Hunter teach the youngest prince his Erse alphabet, or being stunned by a dialogue half Highland and half German, between the librarian and Madame Schevellenberg! Lady, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, &c.

LETTER CCXIV.

Monday night, Jan. 7, 1782.

I WAS angry, I am angry; but the Gods know, not with you, madam, nor with anybody else in particular. I am aggrieved by nobody. Mine is an honester and an unselfish indignation. I am hurt to see all prospects annihilated that would have made one care about what is to survive one. Nothing will be left of England but the vestiges of its grandeur; and what shocks one already is, that the Vandalism that overspreads ruined empires has anteceded our last moments. Bad taste, spite, calumny, pert dulness, and blundering affectation of humour have taken place of everything agreeable. I would not quote such records as the newspapers if they were not the oracles of the times, and what everybody reads and cites.

Besides Macpherson's daily column of lies, is there a paragraph that is not scandalous or malevolent even in those that are set apart as a tithe for truth? Half of each is replete with error and ignorance. If a family has a misfortune of any kind, it is cast in every mould in ill-nature's shop, and the public is *diverted* in every way in which it can be misconstrued. I need instance but in the late melancholy adventure of Lord Camden's daughter. Is not a country more savage than Hottentots, where all private distresses are served up the next morning for the breakfast and entertainment of the public? When you have waded through the scandal of the day, the next repast is a long dissertation on two contending pantomimes, while a mixture of losses of ships and armies and islands is a glaring mark of the insensible stupidity of the age, which is less occupied by national disgrace and calamity, than by slander that used to be confined to old maids, and follies only fit for children. A week's newspapers preserved to the end of the next century will explain why we are fallen so low. They would supply Voltaire with a chapter on *les mœurs du temps.* I think I have justified myself and my contempt for the times I live in, madam, and why I am not ambitious of having it remembered that I belonged to them.

I cannot answer your ladyship's questions about Lord Essex's trial; indeed I do not remember the circumstance.

Miss Keppel is much better. Sir Richard Jebb is confident of its being a bilious case.

I have been this evening at Miss Monckton's to see Mademoiselle Theodore dance a minuet with young Edgecumbe; and to-morrow I shall go to the opera, for the first time this year, to see her and hear the "Allegranti," as Queen Elizabeth's reign is over, and there is no likelihood of there being any trials. I do not believe that even her ghost condescended to peep at the ball that was given at Hatfield last Thursday to the county of Hertford.

Pray do not forget Lord Chandos at Woburn. Mine is in black profusely laced with silver, a white waistcoat much slashed, and a round black hat, with a rich jewel.

Tuesday.

My project of going to the opera is addled. I have got the rheumatism in my left arm, and cannot put on my coat. It is not the gout; I know his tooth too well to mistake his bite.

LETTER CCXV.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 12, 1782.

YOUR ladyship will excuse my employing Kirgate,* as I am not able to write myself. One would have thought that I had been too well acquainted with the gout's voice to mistake his accent for a stranger's; but as the pain began on the inside of my elbow, I flattered myself that it was only rheumatic. Next morning I was cured of my mistake, and at present

* This letter is in his servant's hand-writing.—ED.

my poor lean hand is colossal. I have had much less pain that fever, but three restless nights have convinced me so much of my extreme weakness, that should the gout take a fancy, as it did some years ago, of making the grand tour of my person, I should little expect to get through it; indeed I cannot now attempt even to dictate an answer to above one or two paragraphs in your ladyship's letter: much less is my head clear enough to tell you the whole strange story of Mrs. Steuart. The family themselves neither are nor can ever be certain in their belief; but upon the whole it seems to me to have been a sudden fit of lunacy with which she had been afflicted.

Captain Waldegrave was so very obliging and good-natured as to call on me this morning, and I was happy to see him look so much better than I expected after all his vexations, disappointments and illness. He talked of being at Ampthill I think on Monday next.

Doctor Dee's black stone was named in the catalogue of the collection of the Earls of Peterborough, whence it went to Lady Betty Germaine. She gave it to the last Duke of Argyle, and his son Lord Frederic to me, H. W.

LETTER CCXVI.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 19, 1782.

I HAD seen in the papers the epigram your ladyship has sent me to-day, and liked it so much, that I cut

it out. Like well I did, too, the Ampthillian lines. It was the subject alone that I disapproved in them; and, though you say I had no right to take exception, as there was no compliment to my roses and lilies, I do maintain that my complexion is likely to last as long as my fame, and, therefore, if I should have been in the right to be displeased at a compliment to the more durable of the two, I might justly protest against one to the shorter lived of the twain. Nay, as much as your ladyship may disparage my looks (which I believe you did out of revenge), I have no doubt but the outside of my head will survive the inside; and, therefore, as I may last till I am a fine man of my age, I beg you will let me enjoy what I can, instead of nursing me with visions of what I shall never attain.

It is my belief, though still a problem, that Lord George Germaine has resigned; which is signing his confession, at least, that America is lost. The King has had a violent bleeding at (his own) nose, which returned yesterday at the drawing-room. Scarce any great ladies, except those immediately attached to the Court, were at the birthday, in resentment for not having been asked to the Queen's balls last year. Upon my word, I believe everybody will have spirit at last in England, except the two houses of Parliament.

So Lord Ossory comes on Monday, and your ladyship very early *next* winter!

LETTER CCXVII.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 9, 1782.

Lord Ossory says that your ladyship complains of my not writing; but he could have told you that I have scarce an inch of finger left; one of those with which I am now writing is but recovering of a new explosion of chalk. I believe they look, in little, like the channels of lava from Vesuvius. Indeed, when our lord is in town, you know it is my compact not to write. He lives at Brookes's, where politics are sown, and in the House of Commons, where they come up. I go scarce anywhere, see few people, and know nothing of the new generations that have been hatched since I went to roost. When I do write, if I had not a sovereign command over my pen, I should talk of nothing but my own caducity, which, as if one's country was a something of which one is part, keeps pace with the body politic, and loses a joint or a faculty every month. As I have not recovered the use of my left hand, so Great Britain is losing her right one, Lord George Germaine—yet, I suppose, like Widdrington in "Chevy Chace," she will continue fighting on upon her stumps, Lords Stormont and Hilsborough; nay, what may she not recover with the semblance of a new secretary, who has all the activity of an Aulic counsellor, the circumstantial minuteness of a churchwarden, and the vigour of another Methusalem. Even the respectable Ellis! what enterprises

will be set on foot by this dashing old Parr and his contemporary, my Lord President Jenkins! Well, I shall expect to be sent for, since the empire is to be recovered by antediluvians.

Our lord, to be sure, has told you, madam, how, in one day, one culprit was whitewashed in one house, and another blackened in the other. I do not approve the treatment of the latter: the courtiers are ready enough to vilify him, now he is fallen; but the Opposition never hit on a right scent; like mongrels, they only worry hunted game. If they were true bull-dogs, they would fasten on that bloody caitiff, the Lord Advocate, who proposed, *en passant*, to starve five thousand fishermen and their families, as a preliminary, and has now got 6000*l.* a-year for condemning the American war, which I suppose he will now promote again, as advantageous to his new post; and then we fast to beg a blessing on such wars and such war-makers! When Lord North told Lord George Germaine that he must go out, he replied, shrewdly, "And pray, my lord, why are you to stay?" undoubtedly for his modesty and philosophy. When one of the subscribers to his new loan asked him if we were near peace, he replied, "A year nearer than we were, and a year nearer to destruction." I hope our historians, Sir John Dalrymple and Macpherson, will parallel this indifference with that of the Roman magistrates, who expected the Gauls in their curule chairs in the forum. Our dictator would be less sad. Cannot you figure him, madam, in the midst of St. James's market, not in a

curule, but a very easy chair, with a circle of butchers round him, splitting their sides with laughing at his jokes, and telling them it was true he had undone them, but should continue a good customer still, whoever should be their or his master; it was all one to Punch.

LETTER CCXVIII.

Feb. 23, 1782.

I NEVER remonstrate, madam, against the behests of Dame Prudence, though a lady I never got acquainted with till near my grand climacteric. I approve of your giving no handle to suspicions; but, is it necessary to banish yourself? Must you be able to prove an alibi? And may not your staying in the country be surmised as calculated for seeing your son more secretly? It avails nothing to cure a jealous mind of one object of distrust—you do not cure it of jealousy. I shall certainly not open my lips on one of your ladyship's motives and measures; but as to your fixing a time for coming, and though Lord Ossory says it will be next week, I have little faith; nor shall expect you before the Greek Calends, a certain time of a month in which the Athenian ladies, who never kept their words, used to come to town.

This was all I had to say, for our lord will write to you himself, no doubt, from the field of battle. Perhaps I ought to congratulate you on his being almost, almost victorious; at least, it was a drawn battle, when

the enemy had a majority but of one. I confess I expected the Opposition would have lost ground, as I thought Lord Sandwich more unpopular than the war, and that the deserters, as usual, of late, would make their peace by returning to their colours; but it seems I little understand how interest operates on men. It appears that it acts again as it used to do formerly, and conducts its mercenaries to the increasing side: still it is my opinion, though I do not boast of my penetration, that the present face of affairs will produce nothing but new confusion. Though the Court should take panic, or be actually beaten, it will recover its ground. The Opposition will not agree, and one little faction or other, will grow, or pretend to grow, more enraged at its competitors, than at the enemy, and will accept the places against their late friends, which they cannot obtain by the acquiescence of those friends.

This, I imagine, will be the case, if it comes to a treaty; but should an alteration and a new administration take place, what can they do, ruined as the country is?—no; I shall tremble for them—not rejoice; especially as their old antagonists turned into an opposition, will be very different opponents, and not conscientious and moderate as they have been. I foresee much more that I will not express; nor will I say more, when it would only be conjecturing. I have no opinion of my own sagacity; and what signifies my guessing what is to happen, when I shall probably see so little of the crowd of events that are coming on? I shall leave my country afloat, struggling for existence,

and then in quest of a new constitution, for I do not see a shadow of probability of the old being restored. To that my attachment was, and I care little indeed about any other that will not resemble it. Perhaps this is not the language of a man rejoicing in the success of his friends; but *places* for them was never what I was solicitous about. On one point I do heartily rejoice—the pursuit of the American war must stop; ay, and for a while at least, despotism must pause; and though it may be England's fate at last, it will not be America's!

I beg your ladyship's pardon for talking so much politics: no, I do not; I could talk to no man more capable of understanding them; and it would be impertinent to treat *you* with trifles at such a moment, which made me write, though Lord Ossory is in town; but I have not anticipated what he will tell you. He is too young not to regard triumph as a good: it is the property of sedentary age, to balance the different aspects of prospect.

LETTER CCXIX.

March 21, 1782.

It was most obliging, madam, to send me the news, though I happened to be gone to the Princess. I did not, indeed, expect to live to see the administration demolished. I hope I shall not be mistaken in thinking the moment not ripe for their fall. Their having

laid down their arms, before a capitulation made, is a very favourable circumstance; and if their successors are wise, may be turned to good account, if, instead of paying Court for pardon, they take care to be above wanting it. If they imitate the last ministers, they will make way for them again, and will fall less pitied, and still less deserving pity.

LETTER CCXX.

Berkeley Square, June 13, 1782.

THOUGH it was being ungrateful for your kind note, madam, I could not bring myself to write when I had nothing to tell you but about myself. What can be said of a lame old creature but that he is still alive? I have been for two days at Strawberry to sleep in the air, which was literally all I could do, for it rained every minute, and, unless I had had a pair of Mrs. Noah's clogs, I could not have set my foot out of the ark. I found every mortal at Twickenham as ill as they have been in town. Both Lady Di.'s daughters were in bed, Lady Browne very bad, and Mrs. Clive, I think, in a still worse way. Then it was so cold, I had no inclination to stay. Of my spring delights, lilacs, apple-trees in bloom, and nightingales, the two last are over and the first going. My orange trees still keep their beds; and for roses, there was not even a white one on the 10th of June (except in the conservatory at Kane Wood), though they used to blow

as religiously on that day as the Glastonbury thorn. In short, the season seems to sympathize with my decay, as poets say it does with them when their Phillis is absent. I don't believe you found Ampthill very sultry, madam; you had better return to town like me, and put an erratum at the end of your almanac, *for June read January.* Summer was made to be felt and enjoyed, not to be taken for better for worse like a spouse, in whom one has no pleasure any longer.

I found nothing new in town but a marriage or two, as many deaths, a house-breaking, and a murder—if they are novelties. Lord Lewisham marries his cousin Lady Frances Finch, Lord Aylesford's sister. Lady Grandison is dead at Spa; her body arrived before her death was known; her steward received a letter from Margate from her maid, to say they had got in there with her lady after a disagreeable passage: he went to look for a house for her, and an hour after learnt that it was the corpse. Sir Thomas Frankland's house was broken open last night in Bond-street, close to St. James's-street, though his wife and servants were in town; and as Lady Chewton and her sisters came from the Opera, they saw two officers fighting in Pall Mall next to Dr. Graham's, and the mob trying to part them. Lord Chewton and some other young men went into the house, and found a Captain Lucas of the Guards bleeding on a couch. It was a quarrel about an E O table, I don't know what. This officer had been struck in the face with a red hot poker by a

drawer, and this morning is dead. So are hundreds of peach and apricot trees of the influenza; but methinks I am writing a letter like the casualties at the end of a reign in "Baker's Chronicle." He would have interpreted them into judgments and portents; now they are only common occurrences, and will be forgotten to-morrow, without disturbing civilized society. Religious times breathe a browner horror on everything; philosophers write folios against immoral times; but, when a nation is perfectly well bred and indifferent, no enormities shock anybody; and, when they have made an article in the newspaper, are mentioned no more than the clothes at the last birth-day. I should not have ventured to tell you half my paragraphs, madam, if you were not a country body of a week's standing.

LETTER CCXXI.

THE weather, I confess, did change, madam, as suddenly and unexpectedly as the Administration, and both probably for a short time. His majesty the sun, who had not shone a good while, came out in a very warm mood, and everybody was impatient to kiss his hand; but in three days his chancellor, the east wind, turned those halcyon days to a storm, and I look upon the bloom of summer as gone. I have been twice at Strawberry, but shall not settle there till next week, when my Court removes over sea and leaves me at liberty, which I shall enjoy as much as the Duke of

Manchester or Lord Ludlow do a drawing-room. My nephew, Lord Cholmondeley, you know, mâdam, is going to Berlin: he refused Russia, which I should have thought he would have preferred, as he is more formed to succeed with a gallant Empress than with a peevish old politician, and could carry better credentials. They say the Prussian King is at last well disposed to us and huffs the Dutch *à notre intention*. If, after all, we do not sink, English vanity will conclude more than ever that Providence dotes upon us, and never will let us be ruined, let us play the fool as much as we will. I have a better opinion of Providence, and, unless it originally bestowed good luck on fools as a balance and compensation, I do not believe that it employs itself in remedying blunders. My countrymen, with their leave, are exceedingly contemptible. They have, for these seven years, been applauding and encouraging the Court to persist in all its frenzy and obstinacy, and now it rains addresses of thanks to his Majesty for changing his administration; though they have no reason to thank him or themselves for the change.

Strawberry Hill, June 28.

I had begun this letter a week ago here, in answer to your ladyship's last, was interrupted, and left it here in my table drawer; yet though it is superannuated, it will be as new as anything I could tell you. Besides Lord Ossory has been in town, and carried you all the novelties of the week, if there were any. Lord Rockingham was said to be better yesterday, but that is a very ancient date in the health of a first minister.

What would Lord Shelburne think of my want of curiosity, who came out of town this morning without inquiring? I am to dine to-morrow with Princess Amelie at Gunnersbury, must return on Sunday for the last drawing-room at Gloucester House; and on Thursday shall be sovereign of myself again, which is much more important to me than who is to be first Lord of the Treasury, if the marquis is carried off in his second dictatorship. Three hours ago I saw just the reverse of what is passing in Lord Rockingham's antichamber. It was Lady North, her three daughters, and one of her sons taking a solitary promenade on the river, and landing to stroll on the shore, without a single Rosencrantz or Guildenstern attending. Forty years ago I myself was one of the *dramatis personæ* in such a scene; and as even then I was perfectly indifferent to the change of decorations, it is not surprising that I should look on them now with much composure; but it was constitution not philosophy: philosophy is only a command of muscles. I never could command mine, when I really cared; and should have made a miserable politician had I ever felt a sensation of ambition.

I believe there is some apprehension of a visit in the channel from the United Squadrons. I heard a good deal about them t'other night, and dreamt the French had landed at *Torbay*, which I loved myself for, as it shewed what a preference there is at my heart to *Torbay*. At least I am sure that I had paid little attention to the idea of an invasion, but a great deal to

a *modicum* of King William's coat, taken out of his wound after the battle of the Boyne, and set in a crystal locket, which Mrs. Walsingham shewed me a week ago, and which probably gave the colour to my dream.

The Bishop of Salisbury is dead; I conclude Bishop Shipley will succeed him, nor can have above one competitor, Bishop Hinchliffe, unless your* *beaufrère* is immediately premier, and names the chancellor's brother. I suppose to-night I shall dream of Bishop Hoadley; for you see, madam, I am an old Whig even in my sleep, and that the powers of darkness cannot affect my principles.

LETTER CCXXII.

Berkeley Square, July 1, 1782.

UNDOUBTEDLY you will have as early intelligence as I can send you, madam, of to-day's great event: Lord Rockingham died at one o'clock at noon. Unless I could tell you what is to be, it would be idle to add more, or to talk of any other subject than what this event will produce; and as I have neither the honour of being a prophet, nor am of the drawer of any cabinet, I will not pretend to say what will be, nor (like a thousand others who know no more than I, and who will not be more consulted) what should be, though I am perfectly clear what ought to be; but as the

* Lord Shelburne, who married Lady Louisa Fitzpatrick, Lord Ossory's sister.—ED.

crown is lapsed to King George again, and as he may not happen to be of my opinion, I shall keep it to myself, and be ready, like the Vicar of Bray, to admire the choice, whatever it shall be.

They say there has not a *howd'ye* as big as a silver penny been sent from Windsor, nor any inquiry made; and yet I should think there was care taken to have minute intelligence. I can give you some very good of the negative kind, madam. Though there is a mitre vacant, and it is now six o'clock, I have not seen a divine knocking at a pair of gates in this square, nor are any marrowbones and cleavers yet arrived.

It will be a singular year if the next six months produce as strange events as these six have; a total change, the caterpillars, the influenza, and the death of a prime-minister. *A propos*, I was forced last Saturday to have two bird-cherries at Strawberry Hill cut down and burnt; they were totally covered with webs, like a sheet full of well grown caterpillars—as I have prodigious faith in nature's prognostics, I am persuaded that we are not yet secure against an inundation of Scotch ministers. I picked up a caterpillar myself that had as many colours as a plaid. You that have no superstition, madam, may laugh at me for telling you of my dreams and omens—to be sure, I did not use to be so credulous; but remember,

> The soul's dark cottage, battered and decay'd,
> Lets in new light through chinks which time has made.

I have so many of those inlets, that no wonder my

faith increases; but adieu, madam, I will go and hear what the world says.

P.S. Oh! I have got a new omen, that tells me Lord Shelburne will be minister—premiers always live where I do. In Arlington-street, my father, Lord Granville, Mr. Pelham, the Duke of Grafton. It is odd that their star and mine should *domicilier* together; but the nearer the church—

LETTER CCXXIII.

Sunday evening, July 7, 1782.

You will not be surprised, my dear madam, that either I do not write or do not know what to write. What I think and feel, I can best tell you by what I said to Mr. Fitzpatrick last night. I met him in the passage of the playhouse; he said, "I fear you do not approve us." I replied, "I feel concern so much more than disapprobation, that I call it only concern." He said, "It was coming fast to this point *before* Lord Rockingham's death;" "Yes," I answered, "but I wish it had not come to this point these three months!" These sentiments might be rolled out into a long commentary, but they contain the pith.

I have no hesitation in saying that I think Mr. Fox*

* About this period was written by Lord Ossory the following character of Mr. Fox:—

"I look upon Mr. Charles James Fox, now Secretary of State, to be one of the most extraordinary men that ever existed. He is the second son of Henry, Lord Holland, a man much distinguished in his time; was

the fittest man in England for prime-minister; I say it aloud and everywhere. But there are points in question at this moment far more important than who shall be premier. The pacification of America and the negotiations on the anvil are of dearer moment; and ought not, cannot wait, for domestic contests. Every man, too, has his own feelings. I have been called a Republican; I never was quite that, as no man ever was quite of any of the denominations laid down in books. But, if never a Republican quite, I never approached in thought, wish, inclination, or reasoning, towards being a partizan of an aristocracy. What! not be a Republican, and yet approve a republic of tyrants! I never admired Lord Rockingham: shall

educated at Eton, and was afterwards a short time at Christ Church, Oxford. His father was doatingly fond of him, indulging him, but also reasoning with him upon every occasion. He was very young when his father finished his political career; but hearing from his childhood a constant conversation upon political subjects and the occurrences in the House of Commons, he was both by nature and education formed for a statesman. His father delighted to cultivate his talents by argumentation, and reasoning with him upon all subjects.

"He took his seat in the House of Commons before he was twenty-one, and very shortly began to shew the dawn of those prodigious talents which he has since displayed. He was much caressed by the then Ministry, and appointed a Lord of the Admiralty, and soon promoted to the Treasury. Lord North (which he must ever since have repented) was inclined to turn him out upon some trivial occasion or difference; and soon afterwards the fatal quarrel with America commenced, Mr. Fox constantly opposing the absurd measures of Administration, and rising by degrees to be the first man the House of Commons ever saw. His opposition continued from 1773 to 1782, when the Administration was fairly overturned by his powers; for even the great weight of ability, property, and influence that composed the opposition, could never have effected that great work, if he had not acquired the absolute possession and influence of the House of Commons. He certainly deserved their

his self-elected executors tell me that I am to take the oaths to Lord Fitzwilliam; I who was a nonjuror in the uncle's time! I see a very good reason why Mr. Fox should say that that imaginary King never dies; but, as I told him t'other night, my Whiggism is founded on the Constitution, not on two or three great families, who are forced to have virtue for a claim to their dignity, and any able man they can find to execute the office for them. My Whiggism is not confined to the Peak of Derbyshire.

In my tiny sphere I have been labouring to prevent disunion: to very little purpose truly. Mr. Fox has suffered me, with his usual and unalterable good humour, to talk to him very freely; not on the general rupture, for I am neither vain enough nor

confidence, for his political conduct has been fair, open, honest, and decided, against the system so fatally adopted by the Court. He resisted every temptation to be brought over by that system, however flattering to his ambition, for he must soon have been at the head of everything. But I do not know whether his abilities are not the least extraordinary part about him. Perhaps that is saying too much; but he is full of good nature, good temper, and facility of disposition, disinterestedness with regard to himself, at the same time that his mind is fraught with the most noble sentiments and ideas upon all possible subjects. His understanding has the greatest scope I can form an idea of, his memory the most wonderful, his judgment the most true, his reasoning the most profound and acute, his eloquence the most rapid and persuasive."

It his highly honourable to both, that, in 1793, when Lord Ossory separated from him, he makes the ensuing entry in his memoranda:—

"1793.—I retract none of my former sentiments of Mr. Fox, but I can differ with him. This detestable French Revolution is the cause, and though I am sure he does not approve it, yet he will not give countenance to the war which we are now engaged in, and in which everything is at stake. He leans in these dangerous times to opinions, which, if not destroyed, must destroy all order and civilization in Europe."—Ed.

foolish enough to suppose that I can persuade him by *my* arguments out of his own; nor do I talk to a politician on his duty to his country, because a master-genius feels something in himself which inferior mortals cannot feel, and which tells him that whatever hurt he does he can repair the moment he is possessed of full power; but my point has been, and shall be, to endeavour to preserve good terms between him and his uncle duke. Even in that I may fail at present, but they are both too good natured not to forgive on the first opportunity.

There is a world more of topics for talk, but the tide is too rapid at present, not to hurry the present moment away, and supply its place before the post can arrive. I have sketched my thoughts, as it would look like want of confidence or political mystery, if I were silent. I am apt to be too frank, and thank my stars I have no secrets to conceal. I like and dislike, and say so, and readily avow my purposes. I long to get to Strawberry, where I shall have no purposes at all. When this vision of a Whig administration, so unlikely ever to be realized, had acquired substance—not then likely to last, has vanished so instantaneously, what a dotard should I be, if again I looked forward! Adieu! madam; I do not believe you enjoy the crisis more than I do; but I beg you not to suppose that I desire an answer. It cannot be pleasant to you to talk on points that touch you more nearly; but I am a creature *isolé*, and what I think or say is of no consequence.

LETTER CCXXIV.

Berkeley Square, July 11, at midnight, 1782.

I AM this minute come from Lady Mary Coke's, at Notting Hill, where I dined with the present commander-in-chief and the late chancellor of the exchequer, and, though the party had been made before the rupture, nothing could pass more amicably; nay, Lord John left us to sup at Richmond House. All this is mighty well, and I might compliment myself on having contributed to preserve appearances; yet I see how little they will last, when any opportunity offers of discovering what is under the embers. Nay, I believe, what moderation remains, proceeds from perceiving already how ill the late precipitation is generally taken. Very ill indeed, by all not immediately connected with the principal actors.

On my table I found your ladyship's letter, and sit down to answer it, late as it is, because I shall leave London to-morrow with no thoughts of seeing it again in haste; for, though my two friends have acted rightly, I am far from being enamoured of anything else. It flatters me much to find that I am so fortunate as to agree with your ladyship and Lord Ossory, and to find you so full of confidence on a point on which I had no right to expect any. You may be assured nothing you have said will pass my lips; indeed, I shall see nobody to-morrow, and am going to vegetate only among my dowagers.

It is self-evident that the sole way of preventing

much evil was by remaining. Nor is it less certain that the rash steps taken must please infinitely in a place whence dissention was always cultivated. What could the opening of so many doors produce but the introduction of some of the late discarded? It will not, in truth, surprise me if the introductor himself is at last sent to graze: nor was I in the wrong when I said in the first moment that Power was *lapsed* back again. Some very disgraceful circumstances that have just come out will repay what has been lost with usury, for all credit in patriotism must be lost when its wages are so high.

Your private lamentation, madam, is equally well founded, though the relapse will be much more dangerous to Mr. Fox than to Mr. Fitzpatrick, whose stamina are of stouter texture; the former, I fear, will destroy himself. I was on the point of saying to him t' other morning, "Well, but you must not go and play at taw again!" but I thought it would be impertinent. What can one suggest that he does not know and must have thought? I did flatter myself that he now was on the high road to all he ought to attain — he would have attained it — but he will neither live to reach the goal, nor, when Parliament is not sitting, take the least pains to promote his own views; but I blame myself for expatiating when you, madam, have comprised in a short fable the quintessence of all I could say. It is so just that I wish Mr. Fox had seen it *last Wednesday sevennight.* I do confess it is he on whose account I am mortified.

I had pleasure in thinking that, old as I am, I should yet see a first-rate minister who would revive this country. That vision is over, and every other! I have been shewn a glimpse of a new Jerusalem: I waked, and found it was a dream! — here conclude my politics. All will run back into the old channel. A miracle happened—and might almost as well not. At sixty-five it is too late to look forward again. I am as much disappointed as if I had had personal views; but I confess that I find it more easy to comfort myself from having had none. I can wish well to England, as I did before; but when one can neither do good nor prevent mischief, it is allowable to leave the public to itself. It will be a capital loss to me if your ladyship and Lord Ossory adhere to your purpose of going abroad; but I cannot be so selfish as to disapprove it. Next winter, I am persuaded with you, will be very disagreeable, and to you an anxious one. What one cannot remedy, it is best to avoid.

Thank you exceedingly once more, madam, for your letter and fable, and be assured, wherever you are, that while I remain here I shall be most unalterably,

Yours, &c.

LETTER CCXXV.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 4, 1782.

I SHOULD have written, madam, had I had anything to tell you: but what can I send from hence but repetitions of the samenesses of every summer? I

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pass most of my evenings at the hospital of the poor Montroses; Clifden is little less an infirmary. I have dined again with the Princess Amelie, and twice with the Hertfords at Ditton, and see a great deal of my family, who are cantoned round me like those of a Patriarch, when tribes began to increase and remove to small distances. My brother is at Isleworth, Lady Dysart at Ham, the Keppels at the Stud, the Waldegraves at the Pavilions, and Lady Malpas in the palace; but I am not the better stocked with materials for letters; nor, though the neighbourhood is enriched by some invention, as Lady Cecilia Johnston's at Petersham, and Lady Bridget Tollemache's on Ham Common, is my gazette at all flourishing, since we have ceased to be on the high road to intelligence. Lord North, finding Bushy Park too solitary since his sun was set, is gone on a progress into the Tory regions of Oxford and Staffordshire; and Mr. Ellis has moulted his French horns with the seals. The events of our district have been confined to the death of Mr. Prado, the marriage of Miss Pococke, the death and will of Mr. Child, which have occupied us more than the hide and seek of the hostile fleets. Bankruptcies, houses to be sold or let, and robberies every night, fill up the gazette of our neighbourhood, but would make dull journals into another county. I have foresworn politics, and have no connection with the next generation. I know nothing of what the Prince of Wales does; and for him who only *undoes*, I am like his Laureat, and talk of anything rather than of him.

George and La Mimie called on me half an hour ago; he is gone to pass a day or two with Colonel Keene on Hampton Court Green; so the fall of a party can make people as fond of one another, as two Englishmen that are perfect strangers, if they happen to meet in China! George is all afflictions; the Duke of Queensberry has broken a tendon, and Mrs. Webbe is dying. I love him so well that I hope he will never have greater calamities.

Lady Chewton is a very good young woman, madam, and I rejoice that Lord and Lady Waldegrave are satisfied with her. Lady Sefton's politics must be admirable: Mrs. Bouverie, I hear, is a great politician too. The trade will grow more entertaining, if the ladies make it the fashion: it was become as much a profession of calculation as that of a banker's shop. I do not know what it would not become, since *honest* Colonel Barré has established a drawback for principles.

I was, indeed, madam, excessively diverted with "The Agreeable Surprise:" it is excellent nonsense, and very original. Whatever is so, has great merit in my eyes: I would not give sixpence a ream for what Mr. Hayley and such copyists write. I am sorry you are to pay half as much for this letter, madam, but what can I do? I have condemned myself to pass the end of my life as insipidly as I possibly can; and yet, since you will have the goodness to recollect me, I cannot give up gratitude, as I have all entertainment; but when I have told you that I am grateful, I have nothing else worth telling you of your ever devoted,

H. W.

LETTER CCXXVI.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 15, 1782.

I AM greatly proud, madam, of having formed so able a scholar as your ladyship. Be assured, that you will every day find more comfort in becoming an antiquary. The study of antiquity has a multitude of advantages over other pursuits. All its discoveries produce new lights and no disappointments. They are not doubtful, like the fruits of sciences that depend on reasoning. Is it not charming too, that one may choose one's field of inquiry? You may pursue the conquest of France with Edward and Henry, humble Spain with Queen Bess, or with her, treat the Dutch with haughty kindness. You may plant colonies in America with Drake, Raleigh and Cavendish; subdue Tyrone, and fetch the regal chair from Scone, instead of being on the point of restoring it. Then, by choosing your period, you may choose your party; and in the wars of the Roses change according to the prevailing side, with every revolution. All this naturally follows, if you dive into the secrets of old families. You grow interested about their heroes, and forget our contemporaries and the present state,

——— From what height fallen!

But I will proceed to your interrogatories, madam. The shield certainly contains the arms and quarterings of a Sydney. Quarter 1st, is Sydney. 2d, Dudley. 3d. Somery, or, two lions in pale azure. 4th. Gray. 5th.

Beauchamp. 6th. Old Warwick, or and azure, with a chevron ermine, always quartered by the Beauchamps.

The shield, therefore, I conclude to belong to a female Sydney, who married an earl, and thence perhaps, Frances Countess of Sussex, foundress of Sydney College. There are, I believe, instances of ladies who have given only their own arms; or such a shield might answer to another of her husband, in which were only his arms. Had she impaled his, they would have been impaled, not quartered, on the man's side; but could not possibly be in the last quarter. Nor could the shield, even without the coronet, represent Sir Henry Sydney's widow, who would have impaled her own arms, or if she had borne her own alone, would have given them alone, and not her husband's alone.

Thus, a little too like a genuine antiquary, I have answered your ladyship's questions, without satisfying your curiosity. Nor could I ever unravel to my own satisfaction the history of Ampthill-Houghton. By the busts in the house, and by the crests in the frieze without, it is certain that it was possessed by the Sydneys. The new-discovered shield confirms it; and perhaps does, connected with your ladyship's postscript, which I have since received by itself, explain the whole. As you have found that Robert the first Earl of Leicester was steward of the manors of Anne of Denmark, and that Ampthill was a jointure manor of Queens, and as one of the busts is of his sister Mary, Countess of Pembroke, the Arcadian, is it not possible, that as the greater Ampthill was the manor-house, Houghton-

Ampthill might be a lodge which he lent or obtained a grant of to his sister Lady Pembroke; who, being a Sydney, and more proud of her brother Sir Philip and her own family than of her husband, might decorate the house with her own emblems, and as a sort of foundress leave a shield of her own arms only with the coronet to testify her dignity? I think we used to doubt whether the male bust was her husband's or her brother's Sir Philip. I prefer this hypothesis to my first idea of the shield belonging to Lady Sussex.

Mightily I am pleased with Mr. Leveson's legacy to Captain Waldegrave. We do not seem in a course that will enrich him by prizes. I had no curiosity about Monsieur de Grasse, though I was in town for two days while he was the object of the moment. To be sure he was something of a sight; but formerly beaten French admirals were no rarity to us.

Mr. Morrice is gone to some mud-baths, I forget where. Having been turning over my books since your postscript arrived, I must hurry my letter, for I am not dressed, my dinner is ready, my cousin Mr. T. Walpole is with me, and I shall not have time to say more after dinner.

LETTER CCXXVII.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 31, 1782.

It is very strange indeed, madam, that you should make me excuses for writing, or think that I have anything better, or even more urgent to do than to read

your letters. It is very true that the Duchesse de la Valliere, in a hand which I could not decypher, has recommended Count Soltikoffe and his wife to me; but, oh! my shame, I have not yet seen them. I did mean to go to town to-day on purpose, but I have had the gout in my right eye-lid, and it was swelled yesterday as big as a walnut; being now shrunk to less than a pistachio, I propose in two or three days to make my appearance, and plead my eye's big belly. Luckily the countess was born in England, the daughter of the former Czernichew, and she is in such terrors of highwaymen, that I shall be quit for a breakfast; so it is an ill highwayman that blows nobody good. In truth it would be impossible in this region to amass a set of company for dinner to meet them. The Hertfords, Lady Holdernesse, and Lady Mary Coke did dine here on Thursday, but were armed as if going to Gibraltar; and Lady Cecilia Johnstone would not venture even from Petersham—for in the town of Richmond they rob even before dusk—to such perfection are all the arts brought! Who would have thought that the war with America would make it impossible to stir from one village to another? yet so it literally is. The colonies took off all our commodities down to highwaymen. Now being forced to mew and then turn them out like pheasants, the roads are stocked with them, and they are so tame that they even come into houses. I have just been reading a most entertaining book, which I will recommend to you as you are grown antiquaries: I don't know whether it is published yet, for the author

sent it to me. Part was published some time ago in the "Archæologia," and is almost the only paper in that mass of rubbish that has a grain of common sense. It is, "Mr. E. King on ancient Castles." You will see how comfortably and delectably our potent ancestors lived when in the constant state of war to which we are coming. Earls, barons, and their fair helpmates, lived pell-mell in dark dungeons with their own soldiers, as the poorest cottagers do now with their pigs. I shall repent decking Strawberry so much, if I must turn it into a garrison.

Mr. Vernon was your ladyship's informant about the Soltikoffs; but he gave me more credit for my intended civilities than I deserved. The French do not conceive when they address strangers to us, that we do not at all live in their style. It is no trouble to them, who have miscellaneous dinners or suppers, to ask one or two more: nor are they at any expense in language, as everybody speaks French. In the private way in which I live, it is troublesome to give a formal dinner to foreigners, and more so to find company for them in a circle of dowagers, who would only jabber English scandal out of the "Morning Post."

Mr. Fitzroy Scudamore, by a very old will, gives everything to his daughter, consequently to Lord Surry, who gets above 40,000*l.* An estate of 1,200*l.* a-year goes to Lord Southampton, if Lady Surry has no children. To two or three very old servants he has not left a farthing—it is no excuse that the will is of ancient date—why did not he make a later?

You are not serious, madam, that Mr. Fox is going to Gibraltar! Is he to be Alexander at Oxydracæ, as well as at Statira's feet? But he may save himself the trouble; I should think the town gone by this time—which is more than our fleet is. Just this moment I hear the shocking loss of the "Royal George!" Admiral Kempenfelt is a loss indeed; but I confess I feel more for the hundreds of poor babes who have lost their parents! If one grows ever so indifferent, some new calamity calls one back to this deplorable war! If one is willing to content one's self in a soaking autumn with a match broken, or with the death of a Prince Duodecimus, a clap of thunder awakens one, and one hears that Britain herself has lost an arm or a leg. I have been expecting a deluge, and a famine, and such casualties as enrich a Sir Richard Baker; but we have all King David's options at once! and what was his option before he was anointed, freebooting too?

Drowned as we are, the country never was in such beauty; the herbage and leafage are luxurious. The Thames gives itself Rhone airs, and almost foams; it is none of your home-brewed rivers that Mr. Brown makes with a spade and a watering-pot. *A propos*, Mr. Duane, like a good housewife in the middle of his grass plot, has planted a pump and a watering trough for his cow, and I suppose on Saturdays dries his towels and neckcloths on his orange trees; but I must have done, or the post will be gone.

LETTER CCXXVIII.

Oct. 1, 1782.

So far from being your gazetteer, madam, I believe I shall be nothing but your echo, for I can only repeat or reply to the paragraphs you send me. I know nothing new, nay, nor anything old that is new. Mr. Churchill and my sister have been with me; I made a little assembly for them, and lighted up my gallery, but the terrors of highwaymen are so prevalent that I could muster but two cribbage and one commerce table. If partridge shooting is not turned into robber shooting, there will be an end of all society!

I admire Lady Westmorland's delicacy in her toasts. Indeed I am so ignorant in the fashions of the world that *is* come, that I thought toasting was quite left off, except by the volunteers in Ireland, and by some of your parsons who probe venison, and calculate how many stone of fat will come to their share; but fashions alter! I should not wonder if it grew the *ton* to sell bargains.

I know not whether the episcopal earl had any hand in ordaining Lord *Russell* for the stage, but I conclude Dr. Cumberland had; at least I am sure he had undertaken to correct it. How curious must the produce be of frenzy steeped in laudanum!

Cecilia I did read, but, besides its being immeasurably long, and written in Dr. Johnson's unnatural phrase, I liked it far less than Evelina. I did delight in Mr.

Briggs, and in the droll names he calls the proud gentleman, whose name I forget. Morris, too, is well, and Meadows tolerable, and Lady Something Something and Miss Something; but all the rest are *outrés*. The great fault is that the authoress is so afraid of not making all her *dramatis personas* set in character, that she never lets them say a syllable but what is to mark their character, which is very unnatural, at least in the present state of things, in which people are always aiming to disguise their ruling passions, and rather affect opposite qualities, than hang out their propensities. The old religious philosopher is a lunatic, and contributing nothing to the story, might be totally omitted, and had better be so. But I am most offended at the want of poetical justice. The proud gentleman and his proud wife ought to be punished and humbled; whereas the wife is rather exhibited as an amiable character. To say the truth, the last volume is very indifferent.

The vindication of the Governor of Barbadoes was quite lost upon me, who had never interested myself in his story, nor even know of what he was accused. I am a prodigious economist of my memory, and never load it with details about people and things for which I do not care a straw. This is meant with no disrespect for your ladyship's information, for which I am obliged, as you see it has furnished me with five lines; a great object in my present sterility! My barrenness is much increased by shutting my ears to politics, to which I never will listen more. I was accustomed to a flourish-

ing free kingdom; I had extended my ideas to empire —I cannot contract them to a fragment of a bankrupt island which has gamed away its fortune, and learned all the tricks of a ruined gamester. We are totally degenerated in every respect, which I suppose is the case of all falling states. In what do we shine? Saving the respect that I have for youth, I do not think the present blossoms are entertaining. They may amuse themselves very well, but surely they are not ingenious nor contribute to enliven us. I think I could still be diverted, if the complexion of the times furnished matter; but I certainly cannot divert your ladyship, when my own mind stagnates for want of something to put it in motion.

Princess Amelie told Lady Margaret Compton two days ago, that Mr. Morrice has recovered the use of his legs: I don't know how her royal highness heard it.

I have now replied paragraph by paragraph to your letter, madam, as if saying my catechism, and given reasons of the faith that is in me; but as good boys are commonly dull, perhaps you would prefer a correspondent that played truant, and told you a few fibs.

Have you seen in the papers the excellent letter of Paul Jones to Sir Joseph Yorke? *Elle nous dit bien des verités!* I doubt poor Sir Joseph cannot answer them! Dr. Franklin himself, I should think, was the author. It is certainly written by a first-rate pen, and not by a common man of war. The "Royal George" is out of luck!

I have told a lie: the "Royal George" is *in* luck. I

have this minute received a letter from General Conway, with these words :—

"I have a piece of good news to tell you, which is the complete and entire defeat of the long meditated attack on Gibraltar, which began on the 13th at 3 P.M., and before midnight all the famous floating batteries were either burnt or sunk by our red-hot balls. They lost, it is said, 1,500 men, but none of distinction named. They saved some in their own boats, and General Elliot some in those he sent out."

Well, madam, is not this General Elliot the old man of the mountain who destroyed enemies with his few Gregeois? It was very obliging too in him to enliven my tame letter by such a gay conclusion—if one is to smile at the destruction of 1,500 men! I did smile inwardly, for two persons came in as I was reading my letter; and, as I naturally said I hoped this event would facilitate peace, one of them said, "it is very uncertain what effect it will have on the King (of Spain): he has a sort of head that may persist the more for a thing being impossible." Now we must wait to see whether the combined fleets will be obstinate too and attack Lord Howe, or let him victual Gibraltar.

LETTER CCXXIX.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 3, 1782.

Our mutual silence, madam, has had pretty nearly the same cause, want of matter; for though my nominal wife, Lady Browne, has not left me like your lord, I have led almost as uneventful a life as your ladyship in your lonely woods, except that I have been for two days in town, and seen Mrs. Siddons. She pleased me beyond my expectation, but not up to the admiration of the *ton*, two or three of whom were in the same box with me; particularly Mr. Boothby, who, as if to disclaim the stoic apathy of Mr. Meadows in *Cecilia*, was all bravissimo. Mr. Craufurd, too, asked me if I did not think her the best actress I ever saw? I said, "by no means; we old folks were apt to be prejudiced in favour of our first impressions." She is a good figure, handsome enough, though neither nose nor chin according to the Greek standard, beyond which both advance a good deal. Her hair is either red, or she has no objection to its being thought so, and had used red powder. Her voice is clear and good; but I thought she did not vary its modulations enough, nor ever approach enough to the familiar—but this may come when more habituated to the awe of the audience of the capital. Her action is proper, but with little variety; when without motion, her arms are not genteel. Thus you see, madam, all my objections are very trifling; but what I really wanted, but did not find, was originality, which

announces genius, and without both which I am never intrinsically pleased. All Mrs. Siddons did, good sense or good instruction might give. I dare to say, that were I one-and-twenty, I should have thought her marvellous; but, alas! I remember Mrs. Porter and the Dumesnil—and remember every accent of the former in the very same part. Yet this is not entirely prejudice: don't I equally recollect the whole progress of Lord Chatham and Charles Townshend, and does it hinder my thinking Mr. Fox a prodigy?—Pray don't send him this paragraph too. I am not laying a courtly trap, nor at sixty-five projecting, like the old Duke of Newcastle, to be in favour in the next reign. My real meditations are on objects much more proper to my age. A letter I have just received from Lord Buchan informs me of, probably, much more splendid courts than the little tottering ruined palace in St. James's-street. Somebody at Bath (whose name I cannot read), has made a telescope that magnifies a celestial object 6,450 times, by which he finds that the new planet (which I did not see in town like Mrs. Siddons), is 160 times bigger than our little foot-ball; and, as the inventor expects to improve his instrument much farther, I suppose the new planet will improve in proportion. Perhaps I do not talk like an optician or an astronomer; but think, madam, what exquisite glasses the new planetarians must have, before they can have any idea of our existing at all! Well, but as those 160 times bigger folks may have remained in as profound ignorance as Sir Joseph Banks' friends or Captain Cook's, how clever is it in *us* in-

visible pismires, to have invented telescopes and calculated *their* size! I have often asked myself whither the myriads that are continually swept from our earth are to be transported? Now, as human pride concludes that the universal system was made for little us, here is a receptacle large enough—at least, that planet may know of others within reach, and not above some millions of millions of miles off. Now stoop, madam, as many millions of miles as all these distances make, and let us talk of Gibraltar. Oh! what an atom! how can one figure it little enough, compared with what we have been talking of? Common sense is lost in the immensity: I am forced to look at my window, and persuade myself that Richmond-hill is a large object, before I can dismount from the stirrups of the telescope, and talk the usual language of the world.

I am glad to hear so good an account of Hatfield from our lord. I have been invited thither; but I have done with terrestrial journeys. I have not philosophy enough to stand stranger servants staring at my broken fingers at dinner. I hide myself like spaniels that creep into a hedge to die; yet, having preserved my eyes and all my teeth, among which is a colt's, not yet decayed, I treated it and my eyes, not only with Mrs. Siddons but a harlequin farce. But there again my ancient prejudices operated: how unlike the pantomimes of Rich, which were full of wit, and coherent, and carried on a story! What I now saw was Robinson Crusoe: how Aristotle and Bossu, had they ever written on pantomimes, would swear! It was a

heap of contradictions and violations of the costume. *Friday* is turned into Harlequin, and falls down at an old man's feet that I took for Pantaloon, but they told me it was *Friday's* father. I said, "Then it must be *Thursday*," yet still it seemed to be Pantaloon. I see I understand nothing from astronomy to a harlequin —farce!

Your new visitor, I hope, madam, has carried you to Drayton. It is a most venerable heap of ugliness, with many curious bits. There is a modern colonnade erected by Sir John Germayne, the pillars of which, according to his usual ignorance, were at first, as Lady Suffolk told me, set up with their capitals downwards, supposing them pedestals.

I condole your loss of an old servant; I know no more of Gibraltar than you have seen in the papers. My Russians did come to breakfast, but understood Strawberry so little, that I thought it never before was so much the nurse—

——— of Goths, of Alans, and of Huns.

I am very uncertain when I shall settle in London, but think I must in a fortnight, when Mr. Duane will. He replaces Mr. Morrice for Cav. Mozzi. Mr. Bull, whom I saw in town, tells me poor Morrice is not at all better and thinks of Naples. I direct to Ampthill.

P.S. Lord Buchan, who tells me a vast deal about *our* antiquarian society at Edinburgh, and generally asks me many questions about past ages, has sent me two franks, that my knowledge may cost him no more than it is worth. Does your ladyship know that Lord

Monboddo has twice proposed to Mrs. Garrick? She refused him; I don't know whether because he says in his book that men were born with tails, or because they have lost them.

The following is an extract (I think you will like it) from a letter of Lord Mansfield to Monsieur Limon, who, Gerbier being ill, pleaded and carried the cause of Miss Hamilton against Parson Beresford, and sent his *plaidoyer* to his lordship. "*Vous avez pris, Monsieur, le rôle destiné à Monsieur Gerbier, et vous l'avez remplacé. On ne s'est point apperçû de l'absence d'Atlas, quand le fardeau a été soutenu par Hercule.*"

The French, I conclude, Lord Stormont's; and the thought too, perhaps—it is *pensé à la Françoise.*

I have seen the *plaidoyer;* it begins with setting forth that Mr. Hamilton, the father of Miss, is in the line of succession to the crown of Scotland; and in three lines more I found that this Scottish princess lived at Pinner—a village vulgar enough for so high-born a heroine!

LETTER CCXXX.

Nov. 5, 1782.

I BEG your ladyship's pardon, but I cannot refrain from sending you a codicil to my last. I have taken to astronomy, now the scale is enlarged enough to satisfy my taste, who love gigantic ideas—do not be afraid; I am not going to write a second part to the "Castle of Otranto," nor another account of the Pata-

gonians who inhabit the new Brobdignag planet; though I do not believe that a world 160 times bigger than ours is inhabited by pigmies—they would do very well for our page, the moon.

I have been reading Lord Buchan's letter again. He tells me that Mr. What-d'ye-call-him at Bath says that the new planet's orbit is eighty of our years. Now, if their days are in proportion to their year, as our days are to our year, a day in the new planet must contain 1920 hours; and yet, I dare to say, some of the inhabitants complain of the shortness of the days. I may err in my calculations, for I am a woful arithmetician and never could learn my multiplication table; but no matter, one large sum is as good as another. How one should smile to hear the Duchess of Devonshire of the new planet cry, "Lord! you would not go to dinner yet sure! it is but fifteen hundred o'clock!" or some Miss,—"Ah! that superannuated old fright, I'll lay a wager she 's a year old." But stay; here I don't go by my own rule of proportion, I ought to suppose their lives adequate to their size. Well, any way, one might build very entertaining hypotheses on this new discovery.

The planet's distance from the sun is 1,710,000,000 of miles—I revere a telescope's eyes that can see so far! What pity that no Newton should have thought of improving instruments for hearing too! If a glass can penetrate 1,710,000,000 of miles beyond the sun, how easy to form a trumpet like Sir Joshua Reynolds's, by which one might overhear what is said in

Mercury and Venus, that are within a stone's throw of us! Well, such things will be discovered — but alas! we live in such an early age of the world, that nothing is brought to any perfection! I don't doubt but there will be invented spying-glasses for seeing the thoughts — and then a new kind of stucco for concealing them; but I return to my new favourite, astronomy. Do but think, madam, how fortunate it is for us that discoveries are not reciprocal. If our superiors of the great planets were to dabble in such minute researches as we make by microscopes, how with their infinitely greater facilities, they might destroy us for a morning's amusement! They might impale our little globe on a pin's point, as we do a flea, and take the current of the Ganges or Oroonoko for the circulation of our blood—for with all due respect for philosophy of all sorts, I humbly apprehend that when people wade beyond their sphere, they make egregious blunders—at least we do, who are not accustomed to them. I am so vulgar, that when I hear of 17,000,000 of miles, I fancy astronomers compute by livres like the French, and not by pounds sterling, I mean, not by miles sterling. Nay, as it is but two days that I have grown wise, I have another whim. I took it into my head last night, that our antediluvian ancestors, who are said to have lived many hundred years, were not inhabitants of this earth, but of the new planet, whence might come the account, which we believe came from heaven. Whatever came from the skies, where the new planet lives, would,

in the apprehension of men at that time, be deemed to come from heaven. Now if a patriarch lived ten of their years, which may be the term of their existence, and which according to our computation make 800 of our years, he was pretty nearly of the age of Methusalem; for what signifies a fraction of an hundred years or so?—Yet I offer this only as a conjecture; nor will I weary your ladyship with more, though I am not a little vain of my new speculations.

A propos to millions, have you heard, madam, of the Prince de Guemené's breaking for 28,000,000 of livres? Would not one think it was a debt contracted by the two Foleys? I know of another Prince de Guemené, who lived, I think, early in the reign of Louis Quatorze, and had a great deal of wit. His wife was a *savante.* One day, he met coming out of her closet an old Jew, (not such as the present prince and the Foleys deal with, but) quite in rags, and half stark. The prince asked who he was? The princess replied scornfully, "*mais il me montre l'hebreu.*"—"*Eh bien,*" said the prince, "*et bien-tôt il vous montrera son cul.*"—I hope this story, if you did not know it, will make amends for the rest of my rhapsody.

LETTER CCXXXI.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 10, 1782.

I AM very happy that my illustrations of the new planet, which you call anonymous, amused your lady-

ship and Lady Anne for a moment in our lord's absence; but I do not intend to overload you with them; I assure you the inventor has christened it *the Georgian*—whether in imitation of the constellation named *Charles's Wain*, or to console his majesty with new dominions in lieu of those he has lost, I do not know. I was happy to be *planet-struck*, as you so properly call it; for having totally abandoned politics and authorship, I catch at any whim that will occupy me for a day or two, and stop a gap in my correspondences. Lord Ossory asks very reasonably why I correspond with Lord Buchan—because I cannot help it now and then: I am his Tom Hearne, and he *will* extract from me whatever in the course of my antiquarian dips, I have picked up about Scottish kings and queens, for whom in truth I never cared a straw. I have tried everything but being rude to break off the intercourse; and sometimes go as near the line as I can by smiling. My last answer was of that kind: I humbly pointed out an error of the press in the first number of the Memoirs of their society which he sent me. On the reverse of a medal of their vestal martyr, Queen Mary, they have printed *Satyr* for *Saltyr*—and I terrified myself lest it should be construed into an intended aspersion!

My last diversion has been of a different nature from star-gazing. Mrs. Hobart, last Friday, invited me to her play, at Ham Common. I went, because Mr. Conway and Lady Ailesbury, and Mrs. Damer, were for that purpose at Lady Cecilia Johnston's, and

I had not seen them for an age. I was extremely pleased, especially with the after-piece. The play was "All in the Wrong," and a vile thing it is: there are three couple, all equally jealous, with no discrimination of character. It is like two looking-glasses that reflect each other without end. Mrs. Hobart played admirably, and most genteely, which was very refreshing, as one never sees anything like a woman of fashion on the stage. Her three daughters all did well. A Mr. Fury is cried up as a miracle: he was not so in my eyes. Col. Gardner, who is not liked, was, I thought, little inferior, yet but middling; but in the "Guardian," all was perfect. The eldest Miss Hobart, so lovely and so modest, was not acting, she was the thing itself. There was an Irish Mr. Arabin, from Sir William East's theatre, incomparable in the uncle. His own brogue added exceedingly, and a Colonel Tims, being a very well-looking man, and playing most justly, made the story very probable.

There was a great deal of good company collected from the environs and even from London, but so armed with blunderbusses, that when the servants were drawn up after the play, you would have thought it had been a midnight review of conspirators on a heath. There were Lord and Lady North, and their family, the Seftons, Lucans, Duncannons, Lady Maries Coke and Lowther, Lords Graham and Palmerston, Lady Bridget Tollemache and her sister, the T. Pitts, and the two Storers. There too I saw Mrs. Johnstone, the Portugu-Englishwoman, that was called such a

beauty: she is a fine figure, but not handsome, though too good for such a brutal swine.

You are very kind about my nieces, madam; but I do not believe there was the least intention of hurt to them. The gentlemen were cleaning their pistols at the window of the Toy, and discharged them as the girls were going by. Mrs. Keppel took an alarm; and much less falling on such a soil as Hampton Court will bring forth lies a hundred fold. Lady Chewton looked remarkably well at her return from Weymouth; I know nothing of her since.

Berkeley Square, 12th.

I had begun this letter at Strawberry on Sunday night just before I went to bed: my *reveil* was shocking; an express brought me news of the death of Lady Hertford! I truly loved her, she had been invariably kind to me for forty years. She had been seized on the preceding Sunday with a violent cough and spitting of blood, and left Ditton on the Tuesday for fear of being confined in that damp spot, which has been her death. Lady Ailesbury saw her on Friday morning and thought her very ill, and I had determined to come to her yesterday morning, but heard the cruel event before I could set out; it was an inflammation in her bowels, but as on Friday she had had no physician, I could not conceive her in danger. The moment I arrived I sent to know if Lord Hertford would see me; he said he would in the evening. I went, but met his son Henry in the hall, who said his father could not bear the interview.

Alas! this was a relief to me: I had amassed resolution to go, as it was right I should, but I behaved so wretchedly at the sight of the son, that it was well I did not see the father! His loss is beyond measure. She was not only the most affectionate wife but the the most useful one, and almost the only person I ever saw that never neglected or put off, or forgot anything that was to be done. She was always proper, either in the highest life or in the most domestic. Her good humour made both sit easy; to herself only she gave disquiet by a temper so excessively affectionate. In short, I was witness to so many virtues in her, that after my lord and her children, I believe nobody regrets her so sincerely as I do. Her house was one of my few remaining habitudes; but those drawbacks on long life make its conclusion less unwelcome!

LETTER CCXXXII.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 16, 1782.

YOUR ladyship, as ever, is good to me both in inviting and in excusing me. Could I wait on you, the great misfortune of losing poor Lady Hertford should not detain me; for as Lord Hertford will be in Suffolk, I could be of no use to him; and to be at Ampthill would be much more agreeable than to be in London, where I have lost the house to which for forty years I went the oftenest—but to London I must go on Monday on different businesses. One is to meet Lord

Orford's lawyers with Mr. Duane, whom I have obtained to replace Mr. Morrice as referee for the suit between my lord and his mother's residuary legatee, who has been treated scandalously and put off to this moment. I have another affair to settle with the children of Mr. Bentley who is dead, and for whom (the children) I had placed a very small sum in the funds which I am now to transfer to them. I will say nothing of myself, though, without being confined, I cannot at present take a journey. I should be very glad to meet Lady Chewton, whom I have not seen a great while. I do hear she is very well, but grown extremely thin.

Lord Hertford I am certain will be extremely sensible of your ladyship's attention. Any mark of regard for Lady Hertford's memory will be dear to him. Every word he utters is an encomium on her. Indeed his grief is as rational as it is deep; it is an uninterrupted funeral sermon on her. Yet though he is so devout, it was not tinged with any of the common-place litanies, with which pious people often colour their want of feeling. His concern is too sincere and too desponding to use any expressions that are not genuine. Lady Hertford was his wife, friend, clerk, and steward, and was as active as she was attached. Her affection and zeal attended to everything, and her good sense made everything easy to her; but I forget, and am indulging my own sensations, while I meant only to do justice to those of Lord Hertford.

I hope Lord Ossory adjusted the squabbles of his regiment to his satisfaction.

P. S. As I was going to seal this, I received your ladyship's second kind note. I wish the character could comfort Lord Hertford, but it is no momentary satisfaction that can close such a wound, which every incident that reminds him of his loss will open. It is justice to him to tell you that the very morning Lady Hertford expired his first thought was to have this tribute paid to her. I found a note from him on my table in town, which I could scarce read, to beg it, and in an hour he wrote again. It is as just to her to say that they were my immediate thoughts, and consequently the true; that I set them down, transcribed and carried them at seven that evening, and gave them to his son Henry, when my lord was not able to see me himself—thus your ladyship sees there could be no art, study, or preparation in them. Lady Lucan has just called and told me what I am very sorry for too, though in no proportion, that Sir Joshua Reynolds has had a stroke of palsy—I finish—lest I should moralize.

LETTER CCXXXIII.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 29, 1782.

THE hand * tells your ladyship that I cannot write my own: I have been extremely ill; in point of fever, I think, worse than I ever was; for though I have the gout in five places I have had but little pain. I trust the disorder is turned; for I am so low to-day that the

(1)

* Kirgate's.—ED.

fever must be in a manner gone, and I have no new pain anywhere; therefore your ladyship will be so good as not trouble yourself about my gout which will cure itself in due time.

It was not pleasant, when I was so ill, to have all my windows broken for that vain fool Rodney, who came out of his way to extend his triumph.

I am very happy, madam, with what you say of Lady Chewton. She is an extremely good young woman, of a very grave turn, and extreme sensibility; she very seldom is in high spirits, but always more affected by sorrow than joy. I had a note from her this morning, and expect to see her, and I hope Lord Chewton, tomorrow. I have heard that Lady Waldegrave is very ill, but that my lord was returned from Bath much better.

I have been so entirely shut up for this week that I know nothing, and my voice is too weak to dictate much if I did. As I take a great many killings, more than a Hercules, I shall probably be well again in a few days, and able to write myself.

LETTER CCXXXIV.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 14, 1782.

I HAVE been so extremely ill, madam, that I was utterly incapable of dictating two lines, nor could I give you any account of myself but what was as bad as possible. Since yesterday morning I am certainly

out of all manner of danger, but my breast is still so weak that I cannot speak to be heard without uneasiness, and therefore I must beg your ladyship will excuse my saying any more now. You shall have a better account as soon as I am able to give it.

LETTER CCXXXV.

Berkeley Square, Christmas night, 1782.

I AM as persevering as Widdrington in "Chevy Chace," who fought with his stumps, for I am now undertaking to write to you without a finger, madam. My hand is still swaddled in the bootikin, yet it is less irksome than to dictate. I am wonderfully recovered, and could walk about my room without a stick, if Tonson did not caper against me and throw me down, for I have no more elasticity in my joints than the tail of a paper-kite. Sleep is my great restorative; no dormouse beats me. Nay, I do not even look so ill as I have a right to do, though to be sure I might be admitted at the resurrection without being rejected for a counterfeit corpse: but I cut short details about myself; the gout is a subject of no variety.

I cannot repay your ladyship's story of "L'Amant Voleur." We continue to have robbers of the public, and of individuals, but their passions are all instigated *par les beaux yeux d'une cassette.* However, I have had an adventure not unentertaining. T'other day I

received a letter from Lady Aldborough, an Irish Countess, whom I never saw in my days, but for one quarter of an hour seven years ago at old Lady Shelburne's. All she desires of me is, to select, correct, and print a sufficient number of her father's poems (whom she vulgarly calls the Honourable Nick Herbert) to make a quarto pamphlet, as she does not care to *give* or *sell* them to a bookseller, and then she concludes I will admit him into my catalogue of noble authors. Her lord, she says, is too much engaged in politics when at Dublin, and with improvements of his estate when in the country (which I am told he has improved to none at all) to assort the poems—and then, as ladies are abominably said to tell their minds in the postscript, she orders me to inclose my answer to her lord *that it may come to her free.* Thus I may lay out 30*l.* or 40*l.* for her, and she would not give sixpence to know whether I will or not. I have sent a most respectful no, and have saved her the sixpence, which is all I shall save her.

I have received a much more flattering compliment, and as disinterested as her ladyship's was the contrary. Mr. Bull, to amuse me I when I was ill, sent me my royal and noble authors let into four sumptuous folios in red morocco gilt, with beautiful impressions of almost all the personages of whom there are prints. As they came when I was at the worst, I sent him word that if I might compare little things with great, he put me in mind of Queen Elizabeth, who laid an Earl's robes on Lord Hunsdon's death-bed.

Mrs. Siddons continues to be the mode and to be modest and sensible. She declines great dinners, and says her business and the cares of her family take up her whole time. When Lord Carlisle carried her the tribute-money from Brookes's, he said she was not *maniérée* enough. "I suppose she was grateful," said my niece, Lady Maria. Mrs. Siddons was desired to play *Medea* and *Lady Macbeth*.—"No," she replied, "she did not look on them as female characters." She was questioned about her transactions with Garrick; she said, "he did nothing but put her out; that he told her she moved her right hand when it should have been her left.—In short," said she, "I found I must not shade the tip of his nose."

Have you seen the last two volumes of Bachaumont's "Memoires Secrets," madam, if you have not, don't give yourself the trouble; there is but one tolerable trait, but that is charming. They have hung a room at Ferney with portraits of Voltaire's friends. Under the Abbé de Lille, the translator of Virgil, they have placed this happy application,—

Nulli flebilior quam tibi, Virgili.

They again talk much of peace. Oh! let it come! We have lost territories enough, and got heroes enough in their room! If it is a bad peace, at least we shall not be fools for making it; when we have been, as we have always been, masters to make as good an one as we pleased. I don't suppose our enemies will be as obliging idiots.

You cannot imagine, madam, how long I have been engraving this letter. I am in debt for some others, but my secretary of state must answer them, for I find our royal breast is as tired as our hand.

Yo el Rey.

LETTER CCXXXVI.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 7, 1783.

Though the newspapers have advertised a book called, "Every Man his own Letter-writer," I doubt it will not keep me so long. I really have no movement in any finger of my right hand, but my thumb; and with so serious an excuse, should employ my secretary, if I were not more ashamed to dictate my nonsense, as Lady Anne justly calls it, than to write it. It is no more uneasy to write than to speak the first foolish thing that comes into one's head; but to oblige a third person not only to hear, but transcribe it, is being such a simpleton in cool blood, that if I write by proxy, my letters will have no more nonsense or sense, than those which royal personages send to one another from the Secretary's Office on births and deaths.

I have taken the air, and might have done so a week ago, but was in dread of a relapse. However, as I am all recovered but my hand, and as I fear there is no chance of that ever being well again, I must determine to carry it about in its night-gown, or stay at home for my short forever.

I know nothing, at least nothing that your ladyship would care about more than I do. I have a general notion about treaties of peace, which the present has not hitherto contradicted. It is, that when peace is necessary to the mutual views of two prime-ministers of two hostile nations, it is clapped up in an instant, the material articles being postponed, to be adjusted afterwards by Commissaries, —but that, if they go into discussions, the same causes remain for dispute and quarrel, that made the war—and then the treaty breaks off. I hope that is not the case at present—I am very willing not to be a prophet in my own country. *On pretend* that certain invisible machines, of which one heard much a year or two ago, and which were said to be constructed of cork, and to be worn somewhere or other behind, are now to be transplanted somewhere before, in imitation of the Duchess of Devonshire's pregnancy, as all under-jaws advanced upon the same principle. *A propos*, Lady Jersey desired Mr. Stonhewer to order me to ask Mr. Hayley what had cured him when his head was disordered, her ladyship having a relation in that situation. I sent her word that I not only was not acquainted with, but had never seen him, yet I could tell her his nostrum; he had been put into a course of breast-milk, and sucked the nine Muses, and is now as tame as a lamb.

As this letter, madam, is written entirely *in usum* of the Dauphiness Anne, it is long enough—at least

my hand finds so, which has not attempted a quarter so much, since I had the honour of writing to your ladyship last, and now aches a good deal.

LETTER CCXXXVII.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 29, 1783.

I HAVE had so little to say, madam, and so much to do in making visits of thanks to the charitable who visited me in my illness, that I have not been so correspondent as usual. I have also been for two days at Strawberry, where it snowed most of the time. In truth I have still a more real cause for silence—the lameness of this hand, which can write but a few lines at a time, and must rest every quarter of an hour; so that the expedition with which I used to dispatch my letters is quite gone, and they are become a pain instead of an amusement.

You know, to be sure, madam, that the peace is arrived. I cannot express how glad I am. I care not a straw what the terms are, which I believe I know more imperfectly than anybody in London. I am not apt to love details—my wish was to have peace, and the next, to see America secure of its liberty. Whether it will make good use of it, is another point. It has an opportunity that never occurred in the world before, of being able to select the best parts of every known constitution; but I suppose it will not, as too preju-

diced against royalty to adopt it even as a corrective of aristocracy and democracy, though *our* system has proved that every evil had better have two enemies to contend with than one, as the third may turn the scale on every emergence; but when the one defeats the only other, it is decisive. In short, it is necessary there should be government, but that government should be checked as much as those it controls; for one man, or a few, or a multitude, are still men, and consequently not fit to be trusted with unlimited power. The misfortune is, that men cannot be trusted with the power of doing right, without having the power of doing wrong too, and the more you limit them, the more they pant for greater latitude. However, the more they are limited, the farther they have to go before they acquire the boundless latitude they long for. These are some of my visions, which the experience of all ages and countries has shewn, are such as scarce ever have been realized.

Saturday, 26th.

I had written the above on Wednesday; but on seeing our lord on Thursday, did not finish it. Well, madam, you must hate only the Dutch. The French and the Spaniards are our good friends, and you may *lawfully* speak well even of the Americans, without being called a rebel and republican, as I was by Marie Alacoque. I know few of the terms of the preliminaries, but that Gibraltar, or Rock-Elliott is still in the parish of St. Martin's in the Fields. When I do learn

all the articles, I intend to like all, for I must be so fair as to say that they will be better than I expected we should ever obtain. Nay, if the French had not been as great blunderbusses as we, they might have reduced us much lower long ago. If Ireland has slipped out of our yoke too, the French have no title to boast, who might have had it themselves if they had thought of it before the volunteers. Now I hope it will be a perpetual thorn in their sides.

As one is always open to new calamities on the cessation of the old, I now expect that one shall be robbed and murdered two or three times a day, ay, and a night, more than ever, on disbanding the army; and then we shall have such swarms of French, yes, and insolent ones too! What is that to me? Oh! a great deal, madam; they will come to see Strawberry, perhaps have recommendations, and I must ask them to dine! Is that nothing to a poor superannuated invalid?

I know no news—nay, news are but beginning; news out of Parliament-tide are fruits out of season, have not the true flavour. Besides, when Lord Ossory is in town, I am like a vice-chancellor, who is nobody when his principal is on the spot. I shall, therefore, not trespass any longer on his office, but wish your ladyship good night.

LETTER CCXXXVIII.

The Martyrdom, 1783.

THIRDLY, madam, if I was never to write to your ladyship till I have the full and free use of every finger of my right hand, I should never write again, for I certainly shall recover none of the four; and if I could not move the joint of the thumb, I should not be able to use a pen at all. As you perceive I can, I hope you will not disband the four invalids for the sake of old Colonel Thumb, who begs to die in your service.

Secondly, I do rejoice in the peace, and will, though I find it grows very unpopular,—and fourthly, I will not correct my historic errors: I am not apt to recant my tenets, nor will give up the only King that I have defended; especially as I shall never enter the *sanctum sanctorum*, where one's religion, like a chameleon, takes the hue of the place the instant one enters it. One quality of the chameleon I have, and rejoice in having: the orbit of my eye allows me to look backward; other creeping things only see before them, and think but of advancing: I keep my eye on what I have always been and choose to be uniform. It will not be difficult now to hold out a little while longer.

I was last night at Mrs. Montagu's to hear Le Texier read "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," and was tired to death; for though it had merit at first in the infancy of comedy, it is mere farce, and has no characters. But the famous phrase struck me as applicable to Cum-

berland, who has just produced a tragedy in prose; he has thought that he had often written verses, and did not know that he had all his life been writing prose.

We are going to suffer an inundation of French. It is better at least than an invasion of them, which I cannot conceive why they have not committed. Have you seen his Majesty of Prussia's intimation to the Dutch that he intends to saddle them with the House of Orange for the sake of preserving their *liberty?* I remember a story of a lady who had a favourite plump lark, of which she was very fond. On going out of town, she gave strict orders to her housemaid to take the tenderest care of it. The woman promised. "No, I am sure you will neglect it and starve it." "Lord! madam, how can your ladyship think so? I assure you—" "No, I know you will starve it!" "Come, I know what I will do; I'll kill it and eat it."

There is an insurrection at Portsmouth of a Scotch regiment, who will not go and plunder the remainder of the Indies; and Lord George Gordon, who is excellent at putting out fires, has offered to go and appease them. How can anybody say that there is a dearth of virtue and patriotism?

P.S. Madame de Virri is dead suddenly, as she was just coming to England.

LETTER CCXXXIX.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 8, 1783.

YOUR Dryads must go into black gloves, madam: their father-in-law, Lady Nature's second husband, is dead! Mr. Brown dropped down at his own door yesterday. The death of the second monarch of landscape is a considerable event to me, the historian of that kingdom—the political world, I believe, is more occupied by the resignation of Lord Carlisle; but the petty incidents of the red book are much below my notice, and I care not who is grubbed up or transplanted. The American war is terminated, to my great satisfaction, and there end my politics! I cannot tap a new chapter; but am returned to all my old studies, and read over again my favourite authors on times past; you must not be surprised if I should send you a collection of Tonton's *bons-mots:* I have found a precedent for such a work. A grave author wrote a book on the Hunt of the grand Senechal of Normandy, and of *les* DITS *du bon chien* SOUILLARD, *qui fut au Roi Loy de France onzieme du nom. Louis XII.*, the reverse of the predecessor of the same name, did not leave to his historian to celebrate his dog *Relais,* but did him the honour of being his biographer himself; and for a reason that was becoming so excellent a King. It was *pour animer les descendans d'un si brave chien à se rendre aussi bons que lui, et encore meilleurs.* It was great pity that the Cardinal d'Am-

boise had no bastard puppies, or to be sure his majesty would have written his prime-minister's life too for a model to his successors.

As this is a very gossiping letter about nothings, I will tell your ladyship an incident that struck me the other night. Lady Beaulieu thought Lady Albemarle mourned too long for Lady Vere: Mrs. Hussey said, "Madam, they were cousin-germans." I scoffed at Mrs. Hussey, thinking them removed by two or three generations; but she was in the right; Lady Albemarle is daughter of the first Duke of Richmond, and Lord Vere was son of the first Duke of St. Albans; yet Charles II. has been dead ninety-eight years; nay, Lady Albemarle or the Bishop of Hereford may mourn some years hence for the other. Lady Albemarle supped at Lady Ailesbury's on Sunday night, drank two glasses of champagne, and stayed till past one in as good spirits as ever I saw her.

There has been a more rapid succession in another family. Several years ago, when Lord Strafford and I were at Lord Thomond's, we walked to Walden Church and were shewn in a vault there the coffins of eleven Earls and Countesses of Suffolk that had died since 1700. With this last earl there have been seven more since that time. You will not wonder, madam, that I know no modern news, when I am so deep in the lore of obituaries! Your other correspondents will tell you *les dits et gestes du siècle;* it is more seemly for me to concern myself about past generations than about the rising one.

LETTER CCXL.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 18, 1783—a great grandchild of 1688.

PRAY, madam, do not imagine that I pretend to send you a cool newspaper, when probably you have had my intelligence anticipated by a courier: Oh dear, no; but as gazetteers think it their regular duty to specify everything that happens, as well as everything that does not, though all the world may know both, I acquaint your ladyship, that at eight this morning (which eight o'clock was part of yesterday, Monday) the Administration was defeated on the very same field where another Administration was routed about this time twelvemonth, and, which makes the victory more memorable, the general who was beaten last year, and one of the generals who beat him, had joined their forces to fight the general, who had had a share over the vanquished one of this time twelvemonth.

This is all that is necessary to be told by me, who have ceased to be an *examiner*, and am only a *spectator*.

I will not distract you with any other news foreign to the big event of the day. You would listen to nothing else except conjectures; and those, though one cannot help forming them, would be so entirely coined by my own brain, that they would not assist you. I will not even answer any paragraph of your ladyship's last, except one word about the loyalists. As I always apply my reflections to my own way of thinking, that is, consider what operation any great event

-will have in *my* system, I draw some sweetness from the dereliction of the loyalists. I do pity sincerely the conscientious among them, but I trust that this example will a little cure people of the distemper of loyalty. If the more zealous the *Rubiconians*, and those whose cause they promote against the general happiness, would ever read, or ever profit by what they might read, what a lesson would the American war be against aiming at extending power! *Quieta non movere* was the maxim of a man, who I, who have seen a good deal, do not think wanted common sense; Lord Chatham, no doubt, bought us more glory, but very dearly. We have paid still dearer for losses and disgrace. My Quiet Statesman was called the Father of Corruption, though his political parents and children had been, and have been full of the same blood. Was it a capital crime to bribe those *on sale* to promote the happiness of themselves and others, to bribe them to preserve the constitution and make the commerce of their country flourish? Very different experiments have been tried since. I beg your pardon, madam, for wandering back to my own ideas; but when a revolution happens, it is natural to reflect on those one has seen. I am a Methusalem from the scenes I have seen; yet, t'other day I made an acquaintance with one a little my senior; yet we are to be very intimate for a long time, for my new friend is but ninety-four. It is General Oglethorpe; I had not seen him these twenty years, yet knew him instantly. As he did not recollect me, I told him it was a proof how little he was altered,

and I how much. I said I would visit him; he replied, "No, no; I can walk better than you; I will come to you." He is alert, upright, has his eyes, ears, and memory fresh. If you want any particulars of the last century, I can procure them, but I know nothing of what is to happen *to-morrow.*

P.S.—I have just seen in the "Public Advertiser" a passage in a letter from the Emperor to the Pope, which informs me how little the delegates of Heaven have occasion to *read.* Cæsar tells St. Peter, "that *he* possesses in his own breast a voice which tells what as legislator and protector of Religion, he ought to pursue or desist from; and that voice, with the assistance of divine Grace, and the honest and just character which he feels in himself, can never lead him into error." There! madam, there is imperial infallibility to some purpose! Henry VIII. undoubtedly felt the same inspiration when he became head of our Church; and I dare to say, that the Earls of Derby and the Dukes of Athol, till they sold the Isle of Man, had exactly the same unerring feelings. That inward voice, which the Greeks called *Gastromuthos,* prattles to every monarch before he can speak himself, and did so to Henry VI. in his cradle, though he lived to lose everything.

LETTER CCXLI.

March 11, 1783.

I HOPE, madam, you have been rejoiced at the appointment of every new prime-minister that we have

had for this last fortnight—Mr. W. Pitt, the Duke of Portland, Lord Temple, Lord Gower, and Lord Thurlow. There may have been more for aught I know; as it is no business of mine, and as Lord Ossory is in town, I left it to him to make the several notifications; and it is well I did, or I might have distracted you, as I should perhaps have sent you one administration and he another by the same post. At present there is no premier at all, at least there was not a quarter of an hour ago; nay, they say there never is to be another; and, as I am the only unadulterated Whig left in England, I am prodigiously glad of it. You cannot imagine how much better things go on. Seconds, and thirds, and fourths, execute all business without molestation; for, as every man thinks himself fit to be first, nobody condescends to oppose seconds and thirds: and as seconds and thirds never presume to do more than their duty, nobody has any fault to find; and no mortal ever finds fault without cause. The only present grievance is, the want of levees and drawing-rooms. All the world is eager to pay court to their Sovereign on the abolition of the odious office of prime-minister; but as all the world have thronged to offer their compliments on the accession of every new premier, their present contradictory homage is justly disdained; and, as we can go on without a first lord of the treasury, we certainly might exist without levees or drawing-rooms—why do people go to them, but because they hope to be rewarded by a first lord of the *treasury?* In the East, where all are excellent sub-

jects, they scarce ever see their monarch, except at the mosque or at an oratorio. In short, whether Whig or Highchurchman, one must be pleased with the present dispensation; I am only afraid that, such is our levity, we shall grow tired of this mundane theocracy when the novelty is over; and like the frogs, neither be content with the log, nor the stork, nor the stagnant pool.

. I am grown prodigiously older within these two days, madam. I have been for some time the patriarch of a long line of nephews and nieces, and of great nephews and nieces; yet still, when I had a mind to give myself juvenile airs, I could say, "I have been to see my aunt." Alas! that consolation is gone! The old Lady Walpole died on Sunday at eighty-seven. Did I ever tell your ladyship a trait of her, that was very respectable? She was daughter of a French *refugee* staymaker. When ambassadress, the late Queen of France was surprised at her speaking French so well, and asked her how it happened. She replied, "*Madame, c'est ce que je suis Françoise.*"—"*Vous!*" said the Queen, "*et de quelle famille?*"—"*D'aucune, Madame,*" replied my aunt. Would not one rathe have made that answer, than have been able to say, a Montmorenci? The French ambassadress here at the same time, who was the tally of my aunt, too, in birth, and in quickness of reply, though not of such sublime modesty, was an heiress also of very low extraction. The Marèchal de Broglie, her husband, talking of his children, and to what professions he destined them,

said, "*Et pour le cadet, je l'aurois fait Chevalier de Malte; mais màdame,*" pointing to his wife, "*nous a fermé toutes les portes.*" She replied, "*Oui, jusqu'à celles de l'hôpital.*" *A propos* of *bon-mots*, has our lord told you that George Selwyn calls Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt "the idle and the industrious apprentices?" If he has not, I am sure you will thank me, madam.

Oh! stay; there is a prime-minister just made—not indeed at the head of the treasury, nor one that has either salary or perquisites, but who consequently would be much more in earnest in declining the honour, if he dared: in short, alas! your ladyship's gazetteer is grown such a favourite at a certain tiny Court in Cavendish-square, that he is called to sit at the board three nights in a week. I really think that I should *accept*, if I was sent for to the Queen's house, if only to recover my liberty, as Lord North set a precedent of being as idle as one pleases.

LETTER CCXLII.

March 13, 1783, New Style.

I CONCLUDE, in the language of the day, that our lord has been *sent for*, and that I shall tell your ladyship very stale news when I acquaint you that the Duke of Portland is minister. I should tell you more than I know if I added another promotion, for, though I heard that last night, it is now past four in the afternoon, and, simple as I sit here, I have not learnt,

nay not inquired a syllable more, nor have seen a two-legged creature to-day but a crooked painter. Perhaps there is not another gentleman or gentlewoman in London equally ignorant. Nay, as I go again to *my* Court this evening, where we have not the best intelligence in the world, it may be to-morrow morning before I know whether the old Duchess of Portland or Lord Guilford is to be Queen Dowager—the most important point to *me*, as they are my play-fellows. I sat with the former candidate till past eleven last night at Mrs. Delany's, and had a mind to ask for Margaret my housekeeper to be necessary woman instead of Jenkinson, with a pension of only a thousand a-year, which, according to Colonel Barré's way of calculating, she might have had, if my father had continued prime-minister to this time.

I think your ladyship may now steal into Grosvenor-place, without hearing *odd man* called over the way. As soon as all the *sorties* and *entrées* have been made, and the several parties have visited reciprocally, things will fall into their usual channel, and the nearest relations will not hate one another more than usual. Nay, "*amidst the changes and chances* of this mortal life" (a phrase which one should think had been coined at Brookes's), the reverse of an old proverb has just taken date. *The dearest friends must part* was an obvious and trite old saying; *the bitterest foes may embrace* is newer, and not so trist a reflection: I love gay and good-humoured maxims. If the refinements of society have corrupted the heart, they have, at least, improved

the temper. There are no deadly feuds now. People love and hate one another so often, that they go into friendship or out, as easily as into or out of mourning; and, within this twelvemonth, for almost as short a time. Pray, madam, don't be so vulgar as to stay in the country, because there is somebody or other here that you are afraid of meeting. What an old-fashioned prejudice! Does one like anybody the less, because one dislikes that person? There is not a monarch in Europe that cannot conquer his aversion in *seventeen days;* and shall a subject be allowed greater latitude? I know your ladyship's are not antipathies, but very contrary awkwardnesses; but you must get over them. Lions and lambs, doves and serpents, now trot in the same harness, and it does one's heart good to see them. They will all go into the ark together on Monday, the sun will shine, and some evanescent rainbow will promise that the ministry shall never be drowned again.

Here ends the first chapter of Exodus, which, in Court Bibles, always precedes Genesis.

LETTER CCXLIII.

March 16, 1783.

When Lord Ossory is in town, madam, I shall certainly not pretend to send you politics; no, not even abortions of them. At any time I know none but what I learn by sitting here behind the bar of my own

coffee-house. Indeed I only write now to say that you extended the ideas of my last farther than I meant; I only alluded to a house very near me,* whither I thought it might be awkward to you to go just at this turn of the tide. I shall say nothing more on any such subject. You ought to and must judge by your own feelings.

I do not well recollect how I applied *Exodus before Genesis* in my last, and believe it was too far fetched, as it appeared an enigma. I think it was used on the change of the ministry, and that I referred to the derivation of the two words, which are Greek. *Exodus* signifies *a going out*, and *Genesis a generation*. Now a new ministry cannot be born till the old is gone out; and therefore, in the Red Book or Court Bible, Exodus must precede Genesis. I find that *much learning had made Paul mad*, and that I talked nonsense by talking Greek. I will not be so apostolic again when I am speaking on heathen topics.

As I have not much faith, madam, in sentiments after matrimony, I suspect that your Bedfordshire husband, who would not go to see Mrs. Siddons without his wife, is a hypocrite, and meant to persuade her that he never saw any woman *in Drury Lane* without her being present.

I don't know whether I ought to afflict your ladyship with the dreadful account I received last night from Sir Horace Mann of the devastation of Sicily and Calabria, nor where you will find horror enough ade-

* Lansdowne House.—Ed.

quate to the calamity! What do you think of one hundred and thirty two cities, towns, and castles totally destroyed? This is literally sweeping

"Towns to the grave, and nations to the deep."

There are vanished besides, two islands and a whole river! One Calabrian prince has lost seventeen manors! Mr. Swinburne is become an antediluvian historian. *Nunc seges est ubi Troja fuit!* How diminutive does a change of ministry appear, when nature overturns two countries in a couple of nights!

LETTER CCXLIV.

Berkeley Square, April 5, 1783.

You know I do not wait for answers, madam, when I have anything worth telling you. In truth I go so very little into the world, that unless I hear news in my own room, I know but a small part of what is passing. Of late I have been quite tired of rumours and false reports; nor could give accounts of an egg that might be hatched or addled the next hour; and which, though set under a brood hen, I could not tell but might produce a goose or a guinea fowl. Besides, Lord Ossory could give you much quicker intelligence than I, and more authentic: nor at this moment can I specify the preferments but of those who have actually kissed hands. Yet of one thing I am sure, which is, that General Conway is delighted with Mr. Fitzpatrick's

being secretary at war, and will do everything he can to accommodate him.

I hope you were not alarmed at the attempt on your house. I do expect that we shall neither be safe at home nor abroad. Everything proves that man is an aurivorous animal, and will have its food wherever it grows.

I heard and saw the Misses Fitzpatrick t'other night, and they assured me your ladyship will be in town at the end of this month. I own, as you have stayed so long, I doubt it, but shall be happy to be mistaken.

The weather is so delicious, that I propose going to Strawberry next week for some days, and unless it changes to cold, to be chiefly there. I grow so antiquated and superannuated, that I am fit for nothing but to be laid up in my own Gothic collection. My politics ended with the American war; I shall tap none more. The greatest folly in my eyes is that of old people who cling to the last plank, when they may be washed off by the next wave.

LETTER CCXLV.

Berkeley Square, April 17, 1783.

I AM a little of your ladyship's opinion, that the new administration is not founded upon a rock; however, if they fall, I see no reason for expecting any other to be more permanent. The cards have been so thoroughly shuffled, that it will require several deals before they get into suits again.

I know nothing, madam, that will make a paragraph. I have been for three days at Strawberry, which does not brighten my intelligence; but you are coming yourself, and I believe will not find that I am particularly ignorant. All I have heard, except politics, of which I am tired, is, that Lady Frances Scott is to be married to Mr. Douglas, the Douglas. She was a great friend of Lady Lucy, and it is a proof of *his* sense, that he can forgive her person in favour of her merit.

In a dearth of English novelties, perhaps, madam, you may be willing to learn the latest mode at Paris. It is, to speak broken French—not to ridicule Britons, but in lowly imitation of us. I conclude the Duke of Manchester will be elected into the French Academy on the recommendation of his barbarisms. Well, it is consolatory in our fall to be still admired and aped! The Duc de Chartres is coming to study us, as Pythagoras and Solon travelled to Egypt, and I hope will carry back every monkey-worship that he finds established on the banks of the Thames. Oh! I fib; Lord Mount-Edgecumbe has just been here, and says, the King of France, He in France, will not allow the Duc de Chartres to come hither, as the Count d'Artois has the same ambition of improving himself, and no King can like to be outshone by all the younger branches of his family. I am sorry Lady Anne will not see those two Rajahpouts driving themselves in gigs to Ranelagh.

LETTER CCXLVI.

Berkeley Square, April 25, 1783.

UNLESS you have a mind to be Bishop of Norwich, madam, I can give you no reason for hastening your arrival before Monday—not that I should fling cold water on your coming sooner were I to be in town myself; but I shall go to Strawberry to-morrow—though the weather is as bitter as it always is in Newmarket week—and not return but for my Princess's Monday; and consequently shall not have the honour of kissing your ladyship's hand till Tuesday.

It is not I, but young Mr. Horatio, who has kissed hands for a place in Chelsea College; for though *I* am much fitter for a hospital, it is not my intention to go to one through Court. Another of my kin has arrived, Mr. Robert Walpole, from Portugal, and has brought a wife, who is to efface all Venuses and Helens past or present. I have not yet seen her, but mean to do so soon, lest she should be poisoned by some of the reigning beauties who have views on the Prince of Wales.

I have just heard that Lord Hardwicke is dead. I am not sure it is true, yet it is probable. Soame Jenyns, whom I saw last night at Mrs. Delany's, said he was very ill and kept his bed. They were talking of the new administration; Jenyns said he hoped it would last at least as long as it had been in forming. In truth, I question whether it will be very vivacious. If satirical prints could dispatch them, they would be

dead in their cradle; there are enough to hang a room. The last I think the best; it is called, "Heads of a new *Wig* Administration on a broad bottom." It is better composed than ordinary, and has several circumstances well imagined. The designer is one Sayer, a Norfolk lawyer, who drew the single figures of several members of Parliament. The woman who keeps the printshop in Bruton-street, whence these hieroglyphics issue, says she has engraved all the drawings that are sent to her, and that she gets by them, one with another, ten pounds a-piece. I hope you were charmed, madam, by the figure of the young maiden, in Mr. Bunbury's "Robin Gray."

I rejoice that our correspondence ends here, for this season, madam. How glad I shall be on Tuesday, to say, "Go to Grosvenor Place!"

LETTER CCXLVII.

Berkeley Square, June 20, 1783.

I DID suspect, madam, from the *sort* of commendations that I heard bestowed, and from the *sort* of persons who bestowed them, that I should not be much edified by the *improvements* of Hatfield. The earl and countess did me the honour of inviting me to see them two years ago; but as I neither love to flatter nor disoblige, I have not been—*and two years* have certainly not made me more of *a going* disposition. Brocket Hall I never did see, and nothing

has made me more going *thither*. When I play for green gowns with fair nymphs, *they* are not of the coterie of the nymphs and swains that I should meet there, *il s'en faut beaucoup*. Lord Chewton won the prize, and consequently there would be no gallantry in the case.

I came to town yesterday, expecting, like Cibber, *to meet the Revolution*, but I am told that all is re-adjusted. I am glad of it; I wish the present Administration to last, which is not often the colour of my inclination towards Ministries.

The month of June has been as abominable as any one of its ancestors in all the pedigree of the Junes. I was literally half-drowned on Sunday night. It rained through two stories, and into the Green Closet at Strawberry, and my bed-chamber was wet to its smock. The gutters were stopped, or could not carry off the deluge fast enough. Margaret prayed to St. Rainbow, but as he never appears till it is too late, we were forced to have recourse to mortal help, and litter all the floors with hay to soak up the inundation.

I had a worse woe the next night. The house of De Guines had notified to Lady Ailesbury their intention of visiting Strawberry, and she had proposed to bring them to breakfast. At first I refused, but reflecting that they might invade me unawares, like the Duc de Chartres, I had agreed that she should bring them yesterday; but, lo! on Monday morning Lady Pembroke wrote to me that she would bring them to drink tea that evening. I told her my ar-

rangement, but left it to her option to do as she pleased. From dinner-time I sat at the window watching for them, and taking every old woman with a basket on her head for a coach and six. It rained all the time, as it had done the preceding evening. At last, at half an hour after seven, as I had left it to their option, and the night was so bad and dark, I concluded they had given it up, and called for my tea—but, alas! at a quarter before eight the bell rang at the gate—and, behold, a procession of the duke, his two daughters, the French Ambassador, (on whom I had meant to sink myself,) Lady Pembroke, Lord Herbert, and Lord Robert. The first word M. de Guines said was to beg I would shew them all I could—imagine madam, what I could shew them when it was pitch dark!

Of all houses upon earth, mine, from the painted glass and over-hanging trees, wants the sun the most, besides the Star Chamber and passage being obscured on purpose to raise the gallery. They ran their foreheads against Henry VII., and took the grated door of the Tribune for the dungeon of the castle. I mustered all the candlesticks in the house, but before they could be lighted up, the young ladies, who, by the way, are extremely natural, agreeable, and civil, were seized with a panic of highwaymen, and wanted to go. I laughed and said, I believed there was no danger, for that I had not been robbed these two years. However, I was not quite in the right; they were stopped in Knightsbridge by two footpads, but Lady Pembroke

having lent them a servant besides their own unique, they escaped—and so much for the French and the rain: I wish the latter were as near going as the former! To-morrow I dine at Gunnersbury, and then I hope my troubles will be over for the summer.

I called on Lady Frances Douglas, but could not deliver your ladyship's commands, for she was just going to town to be presented, and did not let me in.

LETTER CCXLVIII.

Strawberry Hill, July 15, 1783.

I WAS in town last week, madam, and just as I was returning, was told poor Mr. Morrice was dead, and Miss Howe has heard so too; but as I have not seen it yet in the papers, I would flatter myself it is not true, for the only truths which the newspapers tell, are those which will give concern to anybody. I am sorry your ladyship has suffered so much by the heat—for me, I am below all weather, for none affects me. If it could, it would during the two days I passed in London, where I was forced to meet Lord Orford's lawyers. Indeed, as much as I love to have summer in summer, I am tired of this weather—

> The dreaded east is all the wind that blows,

it parches the leaves, makes the turf crisp, claps the doors, blows the papers about, and keeps one in a constant mist that gives no dew, but might as well be smoke. The sun sets like a pewter plate red hot;

and then in a moment appears the moon, at a distance, of the same complexion, just as the same orb in a moving picture serves for both. I wish modern philosophers had not disturbed all our ideas! two hundred good years ago celestial and terrestrial affairs hung together, and if a country was out of order it was comfortable to think that the planets ordered, or sympathized with its ails. A sun shorn of his beams, and a moon that only serves to make darkness visible, are mighty homogenial to a distracted state; and when their Ministry is changed every twelve hours, without allaying the heat or mending the weather, Father Holinshed would have massed the whole in the casualties of the reign, and expected no better till he was to tap a new accession.

As I have meditated so profoundly on the season, you will perceive, madam, that I had nothing else to talk of, and consequently did not write till I had some answer to make. With your letter I received one from Lord Chewton to tell me the birth of his daughter, for which event I was anxious. I do not mean that I wished it a girl, nor affect the apathy of the Duke of Devonshire, for though Lord Chewton is no king of the peak, a boy can shift better than a poor girl. However, dear Lady Chewton is perfectly well, and I am easy.

News I have heard none this month, but the deaths of Irish peeresses, Lady Middleton and Lady Gage; but as Hibernian peers spring up like mushrooms, or are mushrooms, I suppose there will be as great plenty

of ermine in that country as ever,—perhaps soon of their own growth, without a drawback from *our* Custom House! Here, I am told, no more is to be issued. As the *sun's* train is much curtailed, I suppose he thinks he has stars enough around him: but to change the topic I was glad that the late chancellor and his virtue were dragged through the kennel.

I must shift the subject once more, and talk of another no better, myself, or finish my letter. I have given one or two dinners to blue stockings, and one pedigree dinner to my cousin, the Portuguese beauty, and her husband, and his two nephews, Horatio and Thomas; and I have been again commanded to Gunnersbury, where I found Prince William. He had been with the princess in the morning, and returned of his own accord to dinner. She presented me to him, and I attempted, at the risk of tumbling on my nose, to kiss his hand, but he would not let me. You may trust me, madam, who am not apt to be intoxicated with royalty that he is charming. Lively, cheerful, talkative, manly, well-bred, sensible, and exceedingly proper in all his replies. You may judge how good humoured he is, when I tell you that he was in great spirits all day, though with us old women—perhaps he thought it preferable to Windsor!

Another day the Jerninghams brought to see my house—whom do you think? only a *Luxembourg*, a *Lusignan*, and a *Montfort!* I never felt myself so much in the Castle of Otranto. It sounded as if a company of noble Crusaders were come to sojourn

with me before they embarked for the Holy Land. Still I was a very uncourteous *châtelain*. I did not appear. In short, Mr. Mason, whom I had not seen for a year, was at dinner with me, and was to pass but that one day with me—*cedant arma togæ*—I preferred the heroic epistle to a troop of heroes: that is, the supposed author of the one to what I do not suppose the others.

You bid me watch my purse, madam, when I am in good company. In truth I am not apt to watch it: yet without my taking the smallest precaution to guard it, it has escaped through two *houses* full of the *best* company in England, and in which there were *bishops* too.

Alas! here is half my letter about myself, and half of that about what I have *not* been doing. It shews how antiquated I am, and how little I know. To complete my personal journal, I send you a vile pun of my own making. Miss Pope has been at Mrs. Clive's this week, and I had not been able to call on them. I wrote a line of excuse, but hoped very soon to salute Miss *Pope's eye*. Excuse my *radotage*—but what better can you expect?

LETTER CCXLIX.

Strawberry Hill, Wednesday evening, July 23.

As your ladyship interests yourself about Mr. Morrice, these are to certify you that he is alive; and

I dare to say merry. Mr. Towneley, uncle of the statuarist, and with whom I once dined at the Grove, came to see my house yesterday, and left word that Mr. Morrice is not only not dead, but better, and at Lausanne, and purposes to winter at Naples; which methinks is risking his life at least as much as trying to preserve it, for the earthquakes do not seem at all to have retired into their own channel.

I have been in town to see Lady Chewton, and found her excellent well, and suckling her infanta without mercy. I believe she will be a more staid nurse than the Duchess of Devonshire, who probably will stuff her poor babe into her knotting bag when she wants to play at macao, and forget it.

More French are just come to see the house, a Vicount and Marquis de St. Chamant and a Baron de Montesquieu. I could not leave the blue room to their sight, for I have the gout to-day both in my ankle and left hand, but I think it will not be a fit, for the pain is already gone, though it came but in the night. Are you not prodigiously glad, madam, that somebody whom you never saw, is dead at the farthest end of the globe? My neighbours at Twickenham are overjoyed at the death of Hyder Aly, who, I suppose, they think lived in Lombard-street.

My visitors are gone already: it is literally true that they arrived while I was writing the last paragraph but one, and went away as I finished the last, though I certainly do not write slowly. They are gone to Hampton Court, and return to France to-

morrow. Don't you like seeing a house in the time one can write eight lines; and a country, in less than one can wash one's hands? I wish all who come to see my house stayed no longer.

LETTER CCL.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 4, 1783.

It is shameful, madam, to keep a letter unanswered that came kindly to ask how I did; but, good Lord! I hate to write, when I have no other, no better topic than myself. My last was filled with nothing else; for alas a day! it is all I know! and never was anything less worth knowing or repeating! The sultry season did me a great deal of good and a great deal of harm. It agreed with me like a charm; but the nights were so hot, that I left off or kicked off all covering, and first I caught the gout in my ankle, then the rheumatism in my shoulder, and so was exceedingly well, except that I could not move hand or foot. Still I love to have summer in summer, and as our doggest days never produce earthquakes nor make us swallow shoals of insects with every mouthful, I never complain of them—not but I do think I felt an earthquakeling a fortnight ago, between four and five in the morning, but it was a poor rickety thing, and could not have thrown down a house of cards. I hope the plague with which we are threatened *de par le Roi*, will prove as arrant a miscarriage. The Semi-

ramis of the North, the devil take her, has fetched it to this side of the globe, and it may be added to the catalogue of her great exploits, which the French Academicians so much admire. I know the plague is not so horrid a thing as some people imagine—at least, Boccace chose such a period as a delicious one for telling stories. He makes a select company of young gentlemen and ladies shut themselves up in a country house, and relate novels to pass away the time, while all their relations and friends were swept away by cart-loads in the city.

Have you seen Lord Carlisle's tragedy, madam? He has been so good as to send it to me. It has great merit; the language and imagery are beautiful, and the two capital scenes are very fine. The story is Sigismonda and Guiscard, but he has much improved the conduct, and steered clear of the indelicacy and absurdity of the original, which did not stop Dryden, who, knowing that he could tell anything delightfully, did not mind what he told; or how could he have thought of making an old king sleep behind a bed instead of upon it? There are some parts that might be mended, and a situation or two too like what has been seen on the stage; yet I am sure your ladyship will admire most of it. Do not imagine that I am prejudiced by the compliment of its being sent to me. I have read it twice, carefully, and liked it better the second time than the first.

I hear often of Lady Chewton, and perfectly good accounts, but I have not seen her since the first week,

for I should be burnt as black as an Etruscan vase, if I went to my house in Berkeley Square, in this weather —no disrespect to this day se'nnight, surely, madam, last Saturday was still nearer to the torrid zone. I begin to think that the Rumbolds and Co. have robbed the Indies of their climate as well as of their gold and diamonds, and brought it home in ingots. You hoped that Hyder Aly would have extirpated our banditti— do not fear, madam; I believe it will not be long before we are outcasts, like the Jews, and become pedlars like them, up and down the earth, with no country of our own.

I saw Captain Waldegrave at Lady Chewton's, and he was quite recovered of his accident; but I know nothing of him since.

I must tell you an excellent reply of a person your ladyship scarce knows, and I, not at all. Lord Lewisham lately gave a dinner to a certain electoral prince, who is in England, and at which *à la mode de son pays* they drank very hard. The conversation turned on matrimony: the foreign *altesse* said he envied the Dukes of Devon and Rutland, who, though high and mighty princes too, had been at liberty to wed two charming women whom they liked; but for his part he supposed he should be forced to marry some ugly German B——, I forget the other letters of the word —and then turning to the Irish Master of the Rolls, asked what *he* would advise him to do? "Faith, sir," said the master, "I am not yet drunk enough to give advise to a prince of —— about marrying." I think

it one of the best answers I ever heard. How many fools will think themselves sober enough to advise his *altesse* on whatever he consults them!

A propos to matrimony, I want to consult your ladyship very seriously: I am so tormented by droves of people coming to see my house, and Margaret gets such sums of money by shewing it, that I have a mind to marry her, and so repay myself that way for what I have flung away to make my house quite uncomfortable to me. I am sure Lord Denbigh would have proposed to her had he known of her riches; and I doubt Margaret could not have resisted the temptation of being a countess more than Lady Holford. She certainly can never have a more disagreeable suitor: and therefore I grow every day more in danger of losing her and all her wealth. Mr. Williams said this morning that Margaret's is the best place in England, and wondered Mr. Gilbert did not insist on knowing what it is worth. Thank my stars he did not! Colonel Barré, or Lord Ashburton would propose to suppress housekeepers, and then humbly offer to shew my house themselves, and the first would calculate what he had missed by not having shewn it for the last ten years, and expect to be indemnified; for virtue knows to a farthing what it has lost by not having been vice. Good night, madam; my poor rheumatic shoulder must go to bed.

LETTER CCLI.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 27, 1783.

I AM sorry to hear, my lady, that the plague is broke *loose* in Bedfordshire; it has been here, and now rages much. I heard so many histories of it t'other night at Twickenham Park, that recollecting I had eaten a vast deal of fruit, I stopped at the apothecary's as I came home, and made him give me a glass of peppermint-water. I don't know why I thought my own disorders preferable, or why one more should signify. I have a constant rheumatic fever every night, which ruins my sleep, though almost all I have lived upon for a century; but how can one talk of one's-self after you have told me such a tragical story! and when half Italy is smoking in ruins! Even my Lilliputian earthquake was true, for others felt it. I don't know how I missed seeing the meteor and its young ones, for I was sitting over against the window. We were better in our old-fashioned summers when sitting up to our knees in rain.

If your ladyship makes apologies for writing of weather and epidemic illnesses from Bedfordshire, I ought to make them tenfold from Twickenham, where our old marketwomen used to have other commodities to traffic with; and yet I know no more than a county club—except that Craufurd has been robbed in Oxford Road in a hackney-coach at ten at night. He lost twenty guineas, and his pocket-book; and as he

has always presence of mind enough to be curious, Hare says that he said to the highwayman, "You must have taken other pocket-books: could not you let me have one instead of mine?"

I believe part of my fever is owing to being disturbed every morning. I do all I can to be forgotten, but my wicked house, like a fine tomb, draws crowds hither, without letting me rest in it. The complexion of my latter days is certainly not of the hue I proposed; it was not in my plan to live with princes and princesses, or to keep an inn. A Prince de Hessenstein has lately been to dine here. My first acquaintance with him was odd; he was then only called count. The last time but one that I was at Paris, and with Madame du Deffand, they announced, as I thought, Monsieur le Count d'Estaing; I was rejoiced to see a man of whom I had heard so much. A *cordon bleu* entered. When he was gone I said he was a very different kind of man from what I had expected—"And what did you expect? and why did you expect anything?" said Madame du Deffand. I explained my reasons; she said this was not Count d'Estaing, but de Hessenstein, a natural son of the old King of Sweden—very well:—two years afterwards the same thing happened, and a different *cordon bleu* entered. Now I thought I was quite sure I had got the true *D'Estaing*; but lo! this second was another son of the same king; and this is he that has been here.

Since my letters are forced to live upon old stories, I will tell you another, madam, that I had from Mr.

Cambridge this morning. A Sir Blundel Carlton, as great a fool as the outset of his christian name seemed to promise, was addressed for charity by an old woman, who had nursed him. He would give her nothing. She urged her care and tenderness, and how well she had brought him up. He fell into a passion, and swore she had been his greatest foe. "They tell me," said he, "that I was the finest child in the world, and that you changed me at nurse."

I hope Lady Ella Fitzpatrick was a changeling too; I should be mortified to have had any genuine Fitzpatrick escape me, who have the honour of being genealogist to the family, and who have studied the MSS. of O'Bull King-at-Arms to the Milesian Monarchs, before they had any arms, or he could write or read. I beg George Selwyn would confine himself to his own province, and concern himself only with those upstarts, the Howards and Douglases, and not meddle with the Fitzpatricks, who are so ancient that the best Irish antiquaries affirm that they reckoned many generations before the first man was created; but I will command my passion, lest I should not have a good night's rest.

LETTER CCLII.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 9, 1783.

I DOUBT my answers to your ladyship's questions will be a little stale as well as unsatisfactory, for I have been absent eight days, in order to try change of air for

my nightly fever. I began to fancy that Strawberry did not agree with me, and went to Park-place, but to no purpose; but to convince myself that if Twickenham does not suit me, no other *country* air is better, the only two good nights I have had these six weeks being two I passed in London. Nor is this the first experience I have had of the kind, as I never am out of order but I mend much sooner in town than anywhere else,—no very grateful discovery, after having meant this place for my latter days, and trimmed it accordingly.

Be assured, madam, that the story of the pocket-book was Mr. Hare's—at least not mine. He has a great deal too much wit for me to presume to deck myself in his plumes, I who am a jackdaw to him. Lady Di. told me the story. Of Sir Blundel I reported all I knew, and my author too. I almost wish you had not paid me with the catastrophe of Mrs. Hesse's family. I have lately heard but too many tragedies. Sir William Hamilton was at Park-place, and gave us the full details of the Calabrian devastation, and more than he chose to insert in his book: of which one dreadful instance shall suffice:—Many crushed wretches perished, because the priests insisted on having the rubbish of churches removed first to deliver the consecrated wafers, who, they ought to have supposed, were capable of helping themselves.

I must be negative too, madam, to all your other queries. I was not well enough to go to Lady Chewton's christening. I have not seen the princess since her nephew dined with her, though like you I have heard

how great a favourite he is. I know nothing of Mrs. Johnson's letter, nor of the mock royalty at Hatfield, but what you are so good as to tell me. George Lord Bristol used to play at drawing-rooms in the same manner at Ickworth, and ask if the parsons and neighbours loved walking or riding. I do not wonder that people are servile courtiers, when they delight in aping the insipidity of levées themselves. One must reverence an *ignis fatuus*, if one should be glad to be a glowworm oneself.

There is little good that is new in Atterbury's pieces, madam, as you have found yourself by this time. Blair's criticisms I have not seen; Beattie's nauseated me. Of the Dauphin's life I have not heard. Of the lives of abortive kings I had a surfeit, too, in "Birch's Life of Prince Henry." A Black Prince happens but once in a millennium.

As, at Park-place, I was within eighteen miles, I made a visit to Lord and Lady Harcourt, and was much pleased with poor Browne's alteration of the house and improvements of the place, as much as I could see of them, for there was such a tempest during the two days and a half that I was there, that I could stir out of the house but for one hour; but I went to my passion, Oxford, and saw Sir Joshua's "Nativity." But, alas! it is just the reverse of the glorious appearance it made in the dark chamber in Pall-mall. It is too high, the antichapel where it is placed is too narrow to see it but fore-shortened, and the washy virtues round it are so faint and light, that the dark

shepherds and *chiaro scuro*, that are meant to relieve the glory, child, and angels, obscure the whole. I foresaw, long ago, that Jarvis's colours, being many of them not transparent, could not have the effect of old painted glass. Indeed, to see his window tolerably, I was forced to climb into the organ-loft, by such a pair of stairs, that, not having broken my neck, I can almost believe that I could dance a minuet on a horse galloping full speed, like young Astley, — for I have seen young Astley, when I was in town last, and henceforth shall believe that nothing is impossible, nay, shall wonder if flying is not brought to perfection, and if Bishop Wilkins does not prove as great a prophet of arts as Sir Francis Bacon. How awkward will a dancer be, for the future, that has not consummate grace on a plain firm floor! But, though Mercury did not tread the air with more sovereign agility than the son, it was the father I contemplated with most admiration! What a being, who dared to conceive that he could make horses dance, and any horse dance, and that men, women, and children might be trained to possess themselves on, over, round the rapidity of two, three, four racehorses, and neither tremble for their necks, nor forget one attitude that is becoming! When he can collect whole troops of such agents, form and command them, I look on him with the reverence that I should have for the legislator of society in its infancy, for a Mango Capac or a Zoroaster. Dr. Franklin and Marshal Washington will sink in my esteem, if the Congress and the Colonies are not ren-

dered as docile as Astley's Hounhyhnms. A master genius, I see can do anything. Impossibilities are difficulties only to those who want parts.

LETTER CCLIII.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 27, 1783.

THE last I heard of the plan of their Highnesses of Gloucester was, that they intended to winter in Provence: if they have changed their purpose, it is more than I know. The Churchills were delighted with Nancy; but then, I think, King Stanilas was living; now, I conclude, both Nancy and Luneville are fallen into the state of other little capitals that have become appendices to greater, are grown poorer, and keep up a melancholy kind of pride in lamenting the better days they remember. But, madam, why are you inquisitive about Nancy? I fear you cast a look that way! I shall be very sorry! It is the sad lot of long life to outlive one's friends: but must I part with them before I go! Well, the less one has to regret, perhaps the easier is the passage; indeed, *my* pleasures are already not too extatic.

The bark, as your ladyship says happened in your neighbourhood, did cure my fever, indeed, like a spell; I took a dose but two hours before I went to bed, and yet slept all night. I cannot say my rheumatism is as tractable; it maintains its post like General Elliot, and I suppose will not remove till superseded by Governor Gout.

I never saw Apthorpe, madam, nor is your account inviting. Old mansions papered and laid open are like modern ancient ladies in *Polonoises* and with bare necks; they are neither respectable nor comfortable, but make one wish them demolished and changed for younger structures. The *façade* of Peterborough is noble, and in great taste; I have seen it twice.

I did not know who were the competitors for the vice-embassy: the papers named Mr. Storer. Mr. Gibbon, I heard, was going abroad for three years; but, as you see, madam, I can only answer your questions by pleading ignorance; I should not be less informed if I lived in Siberia; nay, *there* new exiles would, at least, tell me what had passed since *my* time; but the strangers that visit my dwelling I do not even exchange a word with; and whatever the papers tell me rather creates in me disbelief. I remember how false they were when I lived in the world, and I have not yet fallen into that common practice of the ancient, to believe them only because I know nothing more true. Indifference and content I believe are, as well as age, the causes of my want of curiosity. I like the present Administration, and would not have it changed; but the humiliated state of this country makes me rather avoid all thoughts of politics. My English or selfish pride is mortified at seeing the decadence of our empire. While I was angry at the authors, resentment served for spirits—now I am numbed and careless.

Others, I find, have not contracted my torpor, nor is

it natural that the young should. They seem as eager for honours as when we were at our meridian; but I could not help smiling at the King's showering Irish peerages. Is not it a little like the old Pretender comforting himself for the loss of a crown by bestowing pinchbeck coronets? I wish some of the engineers of the American war were to be created dukes of New England, and earls of Boston and Charlestown; and that since they have been so unlike the Romans, who acquired the titles of Africani for conquering hostile countries, our Machiavels were to be denominated from the provinces that they have lost.

Have you seen Lord Aldborough's foolish and contemptible pamphlet, madam? As his wife could not persuade me to print her father's works, and though no peer, enrol him amongst the noble authors, I suppose she determined her lord should be one in spite of my teeth, and in spite of Nature's too. She is welcome, for I am out of the scrape; I keep no register of living scribblers. The sextons of next age may bury the dead of this.

LETTER CCLIV.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 9, 1783.

MADAM my lady, you have set me a task that poses me, and I must go and rub up my memory. No wonder I did not speak of the "Walpoliana"—why it is two or three years since it was printed, and I had quite forgot

it. I saw it on a person's table, and was interrupted before I had finished the last two pages; I found it such a flimsy thing, that I never inquired after it more. I can now not recollect enough to give you much account of it. All I do recollect is, that I thought it like all the other water-gruel that Lord Hardwicke has published, only with this merit, that the former insipid messes were doled about in leaden kettles, and this is contained in a pewter firkin. It is told with the gossiping importance of an old story-teller, who loves to repeat what he has seen or heard, without judging whether his anecdotes are worth hearing. The only passage of consequence that I remember is the manner of my father's getting the better of Lord Wilmington at the late King's accession; and that is represented with the utmost ignorance of all the circumstances that made it curious.

If it was Lord Grantham that wanted to know my opinion, pray don't tell him how poor a dab I think it, for I like Lord Grantham, and do not want to acquaint him that I think, as he must do in his heart, that his papa is an old Goody, and never was any better—which he may not suppose; besides, the thing is a very harmless thing, and would really be very well for any old servant of my father to have written, who was proud of boasting of what his master had said to him or before him.

I rejoice to hear that your ladyship's *Equipée* to Nancy is not determined; however, I will not lose my "De Tristibus" that I had prepared on the occa-

sion. I remember a Mr. Seward, (father of the present muse of Lichfield,) who was travelling governor to Lord Charles Fitzroy, who falling dangerously ill at Genoa, and being saved, as Mentor thought, by Dr. Shadwell, the governor whipped up to his chamber and began a complimentary ode to the physician; but was called down before it was finished, on his pupil's relapse, who did die; however, the bard was too much pleased with the *début* of his poem to throw it away, and so finished it, though his gratitude had been still-born.

My lamentation is no ode; and though I hope its foundation will be still-born too, yet being perfected before I knew so much you shall have it, as I believe it much superior to Mr. Seward's Pindaric. Mine is *Des Couplets,* in imitation of Monsieur de Coulanges, who had a marvellous facility of writing foolish songs and epigrams on any or no occasion, and I flatter myself that I have caught his manner very happily :—

I.

I love and hate Nancy,
Because my dear Nancy
Has taken a fancy
To leave me for Nancy.

II.

Mais puisque il est ainsi,
Je n'aimerai Nancy,
Que quand ma chere Nancy
Reviendra de Nancy.

III.

Till then I 'll sob and sigh;
Unless that perchance I
Should find a new Nancy,
And then I will fancy,
That in her's I 'm more dear than I was in my Ann's eye.

My dear old Frenchwoman would have asked me to what tune it was set, and would have insisted on my singing it. I should have told her to "Colin's Complaint," or "All in the Downs;" and that though I could not sing, Mr. Craufurd could, and then she would be charmed with it. If your ladyship is not, I will make you amends by a story, with which I defy you not to be delighted.

At the neighbouring village of Teddington lives a Captain Prescott, who is not only a tar, but pitch and brimstone too. Two or three years ago (he is near fifty) he married a beautiful, sensible young woman, daughter of the minister of Portsmouth, who gave her 2,500*l.* Trincolo soon used her inhumanly, beat her, had a child by her, thrashed her again:* she was again three months gone with child, and then he beat her so unmercifully, that a young footman who had lived five years with him, could not bear to be witness to so much brutality, left him, and has since lived a year with Mrs. Clive, who finds him the best servant she ever had. Poor Mrs. Trincolo's sufferings continuing, she resolved to run away, and by the footman's assistance did, and got to London. Her father and friends came up, and made her swear the peace against her husband. The cause was heard before Lord Mansfield. Mrs. Clive's servant was summoned as a witness. The Chief Justice asked him if he had not been aiding and abetting to his former mistress's escape. He said, yes, he had. "You had!" said my lord, "what do

* For love and war take turns, like day and night.—*Lothario.*

you confess that you helped your master's wife to elope?" "Yes, my lord," replied the lad, "and yet my master has never thanked me!" "Thanked you!" said Lord Mansfield, "thanked you! what, for being an accomplice with a wife against her husband!" "My lord," said the lad, "if I had not, he would have murdered her, and then he would have been hanged." The Court laughed, Lord Mansfield was charmed with the lad's coolness and wit, and if your ladyship is not, I hope you will never hear anything better than M. de Coulanges's poetry.

P.S. I never saw the present Duc de Bouillon: I knew his wife, then Princesse de Turenne, a grave, sensible woman, who I believe is dead. I am glad when any French arrive and expose themselves here, that we may have something to set against all the articles that they can produce against our fools.

LETTER CCLV.

Berkeley Square, Oct. 18, 1783.

I NEVER think myself in the wrong in writing nonsense. Sense seldom turns to any account, especially to a writer. Your ladyship strengthens me in my opinion. I sent you some exceedingly foolish rhymes, and they produced very pretty ones in return, and full of meaning. Do you think I will not adhere to my tenet? I only write this to thank you, not to *agacer* you again. I have nothing to say; and our corre-

spondence shall lie dormant, if you please, till I have something to tell you that you might not hear otherwise. I will answer your question on omens, and bid you good night.

Omens I do not pretend to explain, and for this very good reason, that I cannot expound that which you have sent me. If they have any mean*ing*, they must have had a mean*er*; now, if the meaner does not speak to be understood, I take him to be a very silly agent, and I conclude so the more, because the silliest persons are those who guess his meaning; as Charles II. said of a fool, who was a popular preacher in his own parish, "I suppose his nonsense suits their nonsense." But, though I cannot guess the meaning of a thing without meaning, I can easily tell how Lady Grantham would interpret the omen, for a silly ugly prude must know what she would do, if she were her grandmother's picture, and could do the only thing that can be in a picture's power, tumble down, when your ladyship was present. I have a female relation, who is a mighty dealer in those winks which she thinks Providence tips her upon every occasion; and, though they never come to pass, she does not suspect that Providence is making a fool of her—or rather made her so once for all. I wonder I am not a greater adept at interpretation, as she has told me what everything in the world *signifies*, except itself, for expounders of prophecies never allow a prognostication to have any first meaning, though always a second.

I came to town on Wednesday, to get rid of a

rheumatic fever, which had returned with more violence—and I have found the nostrum succeed. It is most unfortunate for me, but I am convinced that country air is too sharp or too damp for me. If I am in the least out of order, I cannot recover but in London. It is, at this moment, a most unpalatable medicine; I have no where to go, and have sat almost alone for the whole four days. I shall return to Strawberry on Monday, and then settle here at the very beginning of next month. Mr. Selwyn comes on Tuesday.

P.S. I direct this to Ampthill, as I conclude, if you are not there, it is less likely to miscarry, than if it went to Farming-Woods, and should not find you there.

LETTER CCLVI.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 8, 1783.

I DOUBT, madam, that when I do go to Strawberry, I shall not be able to discover the lady who owns the tree and five of hearts. It seems to be a German coat of arms, and my heraldry does not extend so far. If I knew the name of the village where the building, that sounds, as if designed for a chapel, stands, one may perhaps find some mention of it in Dugdale or Tanner.

My rheumatism and its appendages are much better, thank your ladyship, for the warm atmosphere of London. They made me afraid to venture to Mrs. Hobart's play, for though I have always been brave

about the gout, the rheumatism has made me a great coward. The first goes, when it has had its swing, and does not return, till, like a comet, it has made its revolution. The other may never leave one, or come back the day after it has disappeared; however, as mine seems to be put upon the establishment, I shall talk no more of it.

The town is so empty, or rather I have lost so many of my acquaintance, that I have scarce seen anybody since I came. I have not heard a word of Lord Spencer's will, nor of the relict, but that she is retired to St. Alban's.

My chief entertainment has been in reading the mutual philippics of Messrs. Flood and Grattan, who, if you believe their accounts of each other, are *very honourable men.* There is a little book which you would not read if you could, called, "Elegantiæ Latini Sermonis." Hibernian elegance is not a whit behind it in displaying naked truth, though of another kind. Well! I am very glad there is so much animosity amongst them: alas! for these eight or ten years one has been forced to wish for mischief, lest worse mischief should happen. In short, I have found out that the love of one's country makes one a wicked animal, and hope for plagues in all the rest of the world!

Would not one think, madam, that there was evil enough toward, and that quiet I might escape in the hurlyburly? Yet this morning at breakfast I was saluted with the first scene of my old tragedy, all sugared over with comfits like a twelfth-cake. I have been writing to Mr. Woodfall, to beg to buy myself

out of his claws, and to lecture him for his gross compliments. I have ever laughed when I have seen little men called *great*, and I will not bear to be made ridiculous in the same way.

I fear you will hear melancholy accounts of poor Lady W., but it is not a subject for a letter.

You say, *we* shall be found at Ampthill till after Christmas, probably. I am very sorry for it, though a little comforted by the *probably*, which at least is not a definitive term. The long evenings before Christmas are just the time when I most wish your ladyship here, as then one can have a little society without a mob. In spring everybody is running after everybody, or waiting till supper-time for those they expect to dinner. Though you say *we*, I depend on seeing our lord next week, and though I hope his individuality will not be absolutely necessary, yet surely the more numerous the appearance the better. Nay, I should hope your ladyship's zeal would rather accompany him, than keep a draw-back to Ampthill. It is in every light so serious a moment, that I could almost chide you for having philosophy enough to look at it from a distance. I who hang but by a thread, and from whom no threads hang, could not be so indifferent.

LETTER CCLVII.

Dec. 30, 1783.

I AM not such a buzzard, madam, but that I did guess from your ladyship's silence *and other circum-*

stances, that my last letter or two were not to your taste. I was, and perhaps shall be, a prophet; but as that is a profession never honoured in its own country (as I can say with truth and a little vanity I have often found), I shall touch on nothing you do not like. I obeyed your silence, lest I should say what you wished me not to say; and now you bid me write again, I am ready to talk nonsense rather than sense, being sure that I have much more talent for the one than the other. News, I know none, but that they are crying peerages about the streets in barrows, and can get none off. Lord Chesterfield is named ambassador to Spain, to pay off the old debt of sending us Gondomar, and the Foundling Hospital is to be converted into an Academy of Politicians.

I did mean to pass my holidays at Twickenham, but the weather is so severe I did not venture. I have been so perfectly well since I came to town, that I will not risk another rheumatism.

American news may now be a neutral article; Washington, *qui, il me semble, tranche un peu du Roi*, has instituted a military order, and calls it the order of Cincinnatus, *ce qui tranche un peu du pedant*. He sent it to La Fayette, and it made an uproar in Paris. As the *noblesse* spell only by the ear, they took it for the order of St. Senatus. They had recourse to the calendar, and, finding no such saint in heaven's almanac, they concluded it was a new canonization at Boston, and were enraged that Washington should encroach on the papacy as well as on the diadem.

It may offend even the Bishop of Derry, who has renounced all religions to qualify himself for being a cardinal. Lord Edward Fitzgerald told me last night that he fears the volunteers are very serious: *sans compter* the spirits which the late Revolution here may give them—but I had better break off, lest I offend by sliding into politics, which you dislike.

I shall like prodigiously to be teadrunkwith'd by Lady Ossory and the Graces, whether they are consubstantial or only coexistent, and shall not regret Mdlle. Heinel, with

"Her arms sublime that float upon the air."

You laugh at my distresses, madam, but it is a very serious thing to have taken an old cook as yellow as a dishclout, and have her seduced by a jolly dog of a coachman, and have her miscarry of a child and go on with a dropsy. All my servants think that the moment they are useless I must not part with them, and so I have an infirmary instead of a *ménage;* and those that are good for any thing do nothing but get children, so that my house is a mixture of a county and foundling hospital. I don't wonder at his Majesty, who has packed off the decrepit earl and the procreative bishop. Adieu till Thursday.

You accuse me of twenty things that I have no sort of title to, as sense, prudence, entertainment, jollity, and mystery. Who would ever think, madam, of those being features in my character? It is like your desiring me to write and *promising* me not to say

above two words in answer to my letters. Indeed, I shall not write on those terms. I have no more vanity than hypocrisy; and, if you would only substitute *indifference* in the place of all the attributes you have so graciously bestowed on me, you would find it the sole key to almost every action of my life for some time past, and I believe for all to come. With neither love nor hatred, with neither avarice nor ambition. It is very seldom that one grows a hypocrite after being the contrary. If I could be vain or forget myself, your ladyship's compliments would have that effect; but, as they have not turned my head hitherto, I trust they will not be able, and then I am sure nothing else will, since I can boast and desire to boast of nothing but being, yours &c.

LETTER CCLVIII.

Jan. 13, 1784.

I CAN just use one hand enough slowly to scratch out a few thanks to your ladyship for your very kind notification. Indeed, I had heard the agreeable news yesterday; and also that the Duke had sent word to Lord Euston by Mr. Pratt, that he will continue his allowance. I am heartily glad; not being of so romantic an age as to believe that love and a cottage compose very durable felicity. The Duke of Grafton has certainly acted very temperately. It would be most unjust to say that a father has not cause to be displeased at his

child marrying against his consent. That he will be satisfied with Lady Euston, if she ever has the happiness of being known to him, I am persuaded. I do not know so perfect a young woman; she has all her father's sense and temper, and the utmost discretion. They who spread absurd stories about her, had not one of the three. I know some of them; they are hags of high rank; they bestow Sunday mornings on church, and the rest of the year on scandal, malice, envy, and lies of their neighbours: and their neighbours are those of the Gospel, the first that falls in their way. Three of those pious Furies are sisters, and their names the Ladies Tisiphone, Megæra, and Alecto.

I can say to-day, madam, that I do believe my gout is going. One of the fogs, or the eternal fog, gave me cold last week, and my pains returned a little. From being foolhardy, I am grown such a coward, that I do not believe I shall venture to moult a single wrapper this age.

You see the Airgonauts have passed the Rubicon. By their own account they were exactly birds; they flew through the air, perched on the top of a tree, some passengers climbed up and took them in their nest. The smugglers, I suppose, will be the first that will improve on the plan. However, if the project is ever brought to any perfection (though I apprehend it will be addled, like the ship that was to live under water and never come up again) it will have a different fate from other discoveries, whose inventors are not known. In this age all that is done (as well as what

is never done) is so faithfully recorded, that every improvement will be registered chronologically. Mr. Blanchard's *Trip to Calais* puts me in mind of Dryden's Indian Emperor:

> What divine monsters, O ye gods, are these,
> That float in air, and fly upon the seas!

Dryden little thought that he was prophetically describing something more exactly than ships as conceived by Mexicans. If there is no air-sickness, and I were to go to Paris again, I would prefer a balloon to the packet-boat, and had as lief roost in an oak as sleep in a French inn, though I were to caw for my breakfast like the young ravens.

This is a volume for me, madam, and my hand must lie down and take a nap.

LETTER CCLIX.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 19, 1784.

I CAN never suspect your ladyship of want of goodness: you would not choose a moment of tenderness for shewing indifference. Indeed, though the six last days of my brother's life were most afflicting to behold, I had cause for nothing but satisfaction from the instant he expired; nor even before, could I have shut out the sight. He had passed a very long life with every enjoyment he chose, with almost equal health: he did not wish to live longer; he leaves nobody he loved in distress; he died without suffering, though his case

ought to have been excruciating—it was beyond the power of remedy; and his indifference, unabated firmness, his gaiety at moments within two days of his exit, and his unaffected heroism, are all subjects of consolation — and the tranquillity of his mind enviable. Yet, I assure you, madam, that death is so much more tiresome a thing than I had imagined, that I had far rather that mine should be extempore than philosophic. I do not like the apparatus at all, and hope I shall know no more of my going out of the world than I did of my coming into it. Life is a farce, and should not end with a mourning scene.

Lord Ossory will tell you much more than I could, madam, of the world's bigger features. I was in the chambers of death on the *twelfth*, when the battle was fighting, which has not yet proved decisive, though the generals were so unequally matched, nor even the forces. The vanquished still hold out, though the language of the commanders is desponding enough to make their soldiers disband. The want of pay is yet more disheartening; and the late vapour of a benevolence betrays the lowness of the military chest, which was to have raised a new army; the thought of which is now said to be given up—at least Mr. Pitt's friends and those of the Chancellor affectedly proclaim *their* aversion to the measure, and lay all blame on *superior* obstinacy, which alone forbids Mr. Pitt's resignation; as on the other side the whispers from the backstairs lament the latter's irresolution. I know not what foundation either have for what they give out; nor

whether both do not speak to shift off the disgrace of a defeat from themselves.

LETTER CCLX.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 6, 1784.

I AM very sorry, madam, to have occasion so soon to return your ladyship's kind condolence on my brother's death. It is more difficult to speak on your loss, though I am persuaded you feel it more sensibly than I did mine, who was prepared for it, and saw it so gradual and so little grievous to himself, that I admired more than lamented. Yet your ladyship, I hope, will have a consolation that I could not receive: I do not mean in point of fortune, though as you have children, you cannot be indifferent to a great accession, as the town says, you are likely to have, and which I most sincerely wish; but in reality you will, instead of losing a parent, I trust, recover one. *That* I most heartily hope will happen both for your sake and hers! but it is not proper to say more; yet I could not help telling you how much I have considered your present position under all its phases, and having done so I will mix nothing else with it; though without any Pindaric transition, one might easily slide into a variety of reflections, which, however foreign to the theme, would be all serious. Your ladyship's most devoted.

LETTER CCLXL

Strawberry Hill, June 19, 1784.

You are very obliging, madam, to embrace any opportunity of reviving our correspondence, and still more kind on that you have taken. I am, indeed, very happy in Lady Chewton's safety. I am pleased, too, that she has a boy, as it pleases her and Lord Chewton; nor do I wish her to encumber him with a bevy of indigent infantas; but alas! what is an heir where there is so little to inherit? Lord Chewton has every amiable virtue that man can have; but virtues are like the pipkins used by chymists in search of the philosopher's stone, which are very worthy utensils when employed in humble offices, but mighty apt to crack in pursuit of gold; and, therefore, I neither believe nor desire that he would go upon the process. I went to town on Tuesday to enquire after her; and that is all I know of London. I have been constantly here, where there is nothing to know, but that it is cold when it should be hot, and that there is as great plenty as if a board of seasons could carry on the business, and let the place of first commissioner be a sinecure to their principal, the sun. My absence from London has been the reason of my not waiting on Lady Ravensworth; which I certainly will on the first opportunity. If she could do me the honour of visiting Strawberry, it should be made as easy to her ladyship as I could contrive; nor are there more than fifteen steps in

two flights up to the blue room, and three more only to the star-chamber. Will you, madam, be so good as to negotiate this for me; and to say that in any case the young lady (whose name I don't know) may command a ticket for any morning she pleases, on giving me notice two or three days before, for you must know that I have been so tormented with visitants, and demands of breach of my rules and explanations, &c., that I have been forced to print a regulation, or, in fact, a memorial, in which I have positively declared I will not depart from my method. All my mornings are disturbed, and the money I have laid out to make my house agreeable to myself, has almost driven me out of it. Lady Ravensworth, on the contrary, if she comes herself, will have the contrary effect, for I will have the honour myself of shewing it to her.

Captain Cook's voyage I have neither read nor intend to read. I have seen the prints—a parcel of ugly faces, with blubber lips and flat noses, drest as unbecomingly as if both sexes were ladies of the first fashion; and rows of savages, with backgrounds of palm-trees. Indeed I shall not give five guineas and a half—nay, they sell already for nine, for such uncouth lubbers; nor do I desire to know how unpolished the north or south poles have remained ever since Adam and Eve were just such mortals. My brother's death has made me poor, and I cannot now afford to buy every thing I see. It is late, to be sure, to learn economy, but I must do it, though a little grievous, as I never was able to say the multiplication table. Well!

before I come to the Rule of Three it will be all over; and then an obolus will serve to pay the ferryman. How he will stare if I cry, "No, stay, I cannot give you that; it is a Queen Anne's farthing."

I rejoice in Lady Gertrude's recovery, who I really thought looked very ill. I cannot say so of Lord Ossory, and yet I am glad he is better, if he wanted to recover—though he is so healthy, that I believe he only took his anxiety for her for an ague. The young and robust are surprised at any uneasy sensation, and conclude it illness. On the contrary, we ancient invalids try to persuade ourselves that any cessation of pain promises an entire cure—and so we die, just when we imagine we have taken a new lease.

LETTER CCLXII.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 19, 1784.

I WAS not alert, I own, madam, in answering your ladyship's last note, and I thought, for tolerable reasons. I am so superannuated, so antiquated, that it is impossible my letters should entertain you; and I did suspect that, with all your civility, *you* felt what *I* know. You might have other reasons, too, for letting a correspondence languish which my unreasonable length of life has protracted longer than you could expect. I am always ready to do justice on myself; and should always remember your past goodness, and

approve your abridging it when it grows a tax rather than an amusement.

You did mention your intention of going to Kingsgate, but I had not heard of that journey taking place. I am not surprised at your liking it, for it is certainly singular, and in no light disagreeable. The situation is uncommon and cheerful, and the buildings and erections so odd, and so little resembling any one ever saw, that a view might, to those who were never there, be passed for a prospect in some half civilised island discovered by Captain Cook, and, with leave of the editors, more novel than any in the new pompous publication. I am as little surprised that the place, after the first impression, should have excited a thousand less pleasing reflections—*there's room for meditation.*

The verses that Lady Ravensworth has in MS., have been frequently printed in magazines since, nay, and before Mr. Gray's death. I was very sorry that he wrote them, and ever gave a copy of them. You may be sure I did not recommend their being printed in his works; nor were they.

I am glad your society is improved by Lady Ravenworth's company, and I hope all the three generations will return much amended in health. Though I am too indolent ever to try it, I have the highest opinion of sea air, and always in every illness determine to go to the coast; and as constantly neglect it when I am better, as if it was a qualm of conscience, that was dissipated by health. At present

I am scandalously well, considering what a winter and what a summer there have been. Except three days at Park Place, I have not stirred hence. If I did, I should not sojourn in an inn at Margate! I have a notion my friend Mrs. Vesey is there, but I have no more intelligence from London than from Hindostan. Florence is the nearest spot whence I hear any news. The dying Pretender has acknowledged his natural daughter Lady Charlotte Stuart, and created her Duchess of Albany, and declared her his heiress. I heard a report some time ago in town, that his queen, as soon as she is dowager, intends to come to England and marry Alfieri, who is or was here, being sent out of Rome at the instance of the Cardinal of York. I don't know whether her royal highness, Lady Mary Coke, will visit her after such a *mésalliance*, though, having quarrelled with most of the sovereigns of Europe, it would be refreshing to have an intimacy with a royal relict.

Have you seen the "Memoirs of Marshal Villars," madam? The two first volumes have many entertaining passages. The two latter are a little tedious, but to *me* very interesting, for they abuse my father—stay, let me account for this satisfaction. The opposition wrote volumes to accuse him of being a tool to France, and governed by Cardinal Fleury; Marshal Villars is so good as to rail at the Cardinal for being governed and duped by my father. It is not living to no purpose, when I have reached to this vindication.

This summer has afforded me *two* such *amendes*

honorables. In my earlier time I was almost proscribed for my contempt of the Duke of Newcastle and Mr. Pelham. Lord Melcombe's Diary does not prove that I was so much in the wrong. It is comfortable to find that one does not *always* form judgments ill founded! and that one's opinions may grow fashionable when one is dead.

LETTER CCLXIII.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 26, 1784.

I MUST reply a few words, madam. I was so far from thinking that you had any *double* meaning in your congratulation on the *Fitzroyal* match, that I had not, when I received your ladyship's letter on that subject, ever heard that there could be a *double* meaning in that expression. It is a delicate subject no doubt, as, indeed, the subject always is, where the fate of a young woman is at stake. However, on my own part I can speak with the utmost truth and simplicity, for I have nothing to disguise or conceal. I remember you thought me mysterious on a *royaller* match; and yet it proved that I had been totally out of the secret till it was publicly divulged.

It is most strictly fact, that I live so totally out of the world, and know so little of what is passing in it, that going to town to see Lady Chewton on her lying-in, as I was leaving her I said, "Is it true that Mr. Fitzroy likes Laura?" "Likes her!" replied she,

"why, have you heard nothing?" "Yes," said I, "I was told at Twickenham that they were much together." "Bless me!" said she, "don't you know that they ran away yesterday!"

I was still more in the dark about volume the second: I had not even so much as heard that the parties had ever been supposed to like—nay, the proposal had been made to the duke before even common fame, that knows everything, had told me what she had told to everybody else; and when everybody else told it, till it reached even me, I did not ask a question about it of those who must know something of the matter, and it was quite accidentally that it has been mentioned to me at all: nor can I at all judge whether there is any likelihood of its taking place. I have not varied in a tittle from the most minute veracity; though as your ladyship cannot conceive the extreme ignorance in which I live, you may perhaps think my account inexplicable, or imagine that there is some coldness between me and my family; though there is not the smallest. I believe my nieces love me as much as they can love an old obsolete uncle, for I am always in good humour with them and never preach; but I do not wonder that they do not run to me with their histories, who never interfere in them, nor give my advice unless they ask it.

The new Duchess of Albany, the only child the dying Pretender ever had, was by a Mrs. Walkinshaw, sister of the woman of the bed-chamber to the late Princess of Wales. The mother and daughter lived in

a convent, at Paris, on a moderate pension, from the Cardinal of York. They formerly went to Rome, but were sent back. The mother died a year or two ago; the daughter is about nine-and-twenty. The house of Fitzjames, fearing their becoming a burden to themselves, prevented the acknowledgment of the daughter.

I have sent for the "Memoirs of Cromwell's Family;" but as yet have only seen extracts from it in a magazine. It can contain nothing a thousandth part so curious as what we know already; the inter-marriage in the fourth descent of Oliver's posterity and King Charles's; the speech of Richard Cromwell to Lord Bathurst, in the House of Lords; and Fanny Russell's reply to the late Prince of Wales, on the 30th of January. They are anecdotes, especially the two first, worthy of being inserted in the history of mankind, which, if well chosen and well written, would precede common histories, which are but repetitions of no uncommon events.

I did read the "Lettres de Cachet;" but like the "Tableau de Paris," they shocked me far more than they amused me. I hate to read or hear of miseries that one knows it is out of one's power to remedy. The earthquakes in Naples and Sicily last year were of that kind. When I glance in a newspaper on an article of a report on convicts, I hide the paragraph with my finger, that I may not know the day of execution, and feel for what wretches, whom I cannot help, are feeling. The knowledge of woes that one can alleviate, ought never to be avoided—when they

are too big for my weak grasp, I fly to the gayer side of the picture—and there one can always find food for smiles. I have often said that this world is a comedy to those who think, and a tragedy to those who feel! —but I have wandered beyond the bounds of a reply, and will wish a calm to Kingsgate, and fair weather everywhere. Were Homer alive, who made gods and goddesses, commissaries and contractors to kings, I suppose he would tell us that Ceres having favoured the English with exuberant plenty, Juno, who was on the French side, sent deluges to drown all harvest. Good night, madam.

LETTER CCLXIV.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 23, 1784.

It is very true, madam, we are robbed in the face of the sun, as well as at the going down thereof. I know not how other districts fare, but for five miles round us we are in perpetual jeopardy. Two of our justices, returning from a cabinet-council of their own at Brentford, were robbed last week, before three o'clock, at the gates of Twickenham: no wonder; I believe they are all hoodwinked like their *Alma Mater* herself, and consequently, as they cannot see, it is not surprising that both she and they should often weigh out their goods with uneven scales.

Being perfectly secure of not having given your ladyship any cause of offence, I did conclude that one reason of your silence must be the topic to which you

allude, and on which you could not like to write after you knew that I had absolutely nothing to do in the affair. I was certainly as little desirous of renewing a theme which terminated as I had foreseen, and as, in the only conversation I had with the person concerned, I foretold it would; the last words I said to her being to warn her to be prepared for such an event. You may then well believe, madam, that it cannot be my wish to revive a subject so little agreeable.

I am acquainted with Mrs. Allanson, and have very great esteem for her, and could tell your ladyship her history, were it not too long for a letter. Her conduct has been noble and reasonable; her patroness's, in my opinion, preposterous at least. The female disciples of that school, which is not that of Pythagoras, the mistress resembling him in nothing but in a thigh of solid gold, are loud in her defence. I hope Mr. Pulteney will protect Mrs. Allanson by the same substantial arguments.

I cannot unlock Mr. Powis's charade. It may be a very good something, but does not seem to be a charade, which used to be formed of a first part, a second, and a whole. Now I did not know that *character* was the whole of anybody or anything.

Balloons is a subject I do not intend to tap. If they can be improved into anything more than Brobdignag kites, it must be in a century or two after I shall be laid low. A century in my acceptation means an hundred years hence, or a year or two hence, for after one ceases to be, all duration is of

the same length; and everything that one guesses will happen after one's-self is no more, is equally a vision. Visions I loved, while they decked with rainbows, or concealed the clouds of the horizon before me; but now that the dream is so near to an end, I have no occasion for lesser pageants—much less for divining with what airy vehicles the atmosphere will be peopled hereafter, or how much more expeditiously the east, west, or south, will be ravaged and butchered, than they have been by the old-fashioned clumsy method of navigation.

It is true, I do not shut my eyes to the follies actually before them. I smile at the adoration paid to these aërial Quixotes; and reflect, that, as formerly, men were admired for their courage in risking their lives in order to destroy others; now they are worshiped for venturing their necks *en pure perte*—much more commendably I do allow; yet Fame is the equal object of both. I smile, too, at the stupidity that pays a guinea for being allowed to see what any man may see by holding up his head and looking at the sky: and I observe that no improvements of science or knowledge make the world a jot wiser; knowledge, like reason, being a fine tool that will give an exquisite polish or finishing to ornaments; but is not strong enough to answer the common occasions of mankind.

LETTER CCLXV.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 12, 1784.

It happens to me now, madam, as I suppose it does to most who have intervals in their correspondence: when they come to write, their letters must be a patch-work of discordant affections—if affections they have; so chequered are the events of human life! If I turn to one side of my mind, it is all sunshine and joy; on the queen's goodness to Lord Waldegrave; if to the other, what true sorrow for the death of Lady Drogheda! She was really as perfect as a mortal could be. Her piety, though rigid, was so sweet! her understanding she had cultivated herself; it was as deep as it was improved. She had a concise and comprehensive eloquence, that summed up the newest and most just reflections in the compass of a short sentence; from the mouth of an ancient sage they would have been handed down as maxims. The gentle and harmonious tone of her voice, the captivating graces of her manner, and the blushes that accompanied all she said, for her resolution of speaking when it was proper, was for ever combating her bashfulness, made such an assemblage of attraction, that she appeared more beautiful than she was in reality—but it was the beauty of a modest saint. Her firmness was equal to her other qualities: perceiving that in fondness to her son she equalled

her mother, she sent him from her to England for his education. She has been carried off in six days by a bilious disorder, leaving a miserable husband, whom, though doting on her, she could not preserve from ruining his health and fortune by drink and play, four or five daughters, to whom her loss is irreparable, a family of brothers and sisters, who idolized her, and a most fond father, to whom this blow will recall the death of her mother, exactly at this time two years ago. I never saw General Conway so much struck as when he brought me the news.

This indulgence to my own sensations will not compensate to your ladyship for the story of Mrs. A., but that indeed I am not entirely at liberty to write, as there are some circumstances which, though highly to her honour, are not proper for the post. In lieu I can tell you a curious anecdote of the King of Sweden. When last at Florence, he found the Count of Albany in a wretched condition, destitute even of an exchequer to pay his household. He imparted his sympathy *at the opera*—to whom, think you, madam? only to the minister of the count's rival,—who, with his usual readiness and propriety replied, that he supposed the subsidy his majesty said he intended to bestow on his poor compeer, was mentioned to *him* as a hint to sound whether it would not be offensive to a brother monarch. He accepted that idea: then proposed to make a free gift of 1,000*l.*,—to be followed by a like benevolence in six months, and an annual

donative of more than both. You expect next no doubt to hear, madam, that the good ship "Guilderstern" arrived at Leghorn loaded with copper-money —*pas encore.* The modern Gustavus desired the English resident to advance the money, for which he would give him a draft on the mines of Dalecarlia. Having received no such instructions, the minister desired to be excused; and some how or other the treasurer is not yet arrived. On the contrary, as the new Duchess of Albany will inherit jewels and effects to the amount of at least an 100,000*l.*; it is said that one of the royal Dukes of Ostrogothia or Vandalmania is to marry her; but this I do not warrant. I had the whole story from the younger Sir Horace, who is just come to England. The elder is too discreet ever to send *me* such anecdotes of the Porphyrogeniti.

You tell me, madam, the humours of the Prince of Wales and his new comrade, old Slender, nay, but they are not of my calibre. I kissed the hand of George I., and do not look to the revels of his great, great grandson. My life has been protracted long beyond the term that my weak frame seemed to promise; yet, having lived long, is no reason for expecting to live much longer. I amuse the remnant by recollection, not by guessing at futurity; for though memory is a shadow, it is at least a more substantial one than hope or foresight.

I have seen Mr. Duane, who is feeble, indeed, but his head is clear; and his appetite for buying curiosi-

ties still alert; consequently I am much more superannuated, for I find *that* passion has taken its flight too!

LETTER CCLXVI.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 17, 1784.

NATURALLY, madam, I should rejoice on a favourite niece being married to a young lord of the great rank, character, and figure of Lord Euston; and much more, on my family's acquiring the honour of alliance with your ladyship's; yet that satisfaction is much abated by the circumstance of the Duke of Grafton's disapprobation. I am not fond of matches where any proper consent is wanting. Still I flatter myself that as my niece's birth, fortune, and character made her in every light a suitable party, except for his Grace's younger children, Lord Euston will not be thought to have made a very ineligible choice; and I do hope that Lady Ravensworth and your Ladyship do not condemn him. It does please me to recollect that I have often talked to you, when I could not have the most glimmering idea of such an event, of the uncommon understanding of Lady Euston. The dignity of her conduct on the wretched behaviour of Lord Egremont, did deserve a man of nobler principles; and fate has amply compensated by giving her one who has acted as honourably as the other meanly. I am not likely to see the consequences: it would grieve me should they prove what

are threatened; but I will venture to foretell that if sense and sweetness of temper can constitute the chief felicity of a husband, Lord Euston will not be unhappy. Still, he will do me the justice to say, that in the only interview I have had the honour of having with him since the marriage was in question, I told him nobody could advise him to risk his father's displeasure. I have most strictly adhered to that declaration; and when I saw my niece the next day (the sole time I have seen her since) I entreated her to break off the connection entirely. This justification I owe to the long friendship, madam, with which you have honoured me: it is not due to any one else, nor should I condescend to make it but to you. However flattered I may be by the alliance, I would not have obtained it by staking Lord Euston's fortune, nor by shocking a father's authority, however harshly, and I think unreasonably exerted. A letter from Lady Waldegrave this morning acquainted me that the marriage was solemnized yesterday.

I am in utter ignorance of anything else that could help out a letter. The papers tell me that the Dutch are drowning their country to save it. It puts me in mind of an old Pagan parable. The priests of the God of fire and those of the God of water agreed on a duel between their principals—what a pity *that* etiquette has been disused! The aquatic champion was clad, for armour, in a jug, bored with holes stopped by wax. Emperor Flame advanced with all the fervour of his element: Mynheer Neptune received the onset with

sang froid; Cæsar pushed on; the wax dissolved, an inundation burst forth—and Vulcan was extinguished —and so be it! How the imperial vulture of Russia must long to extend a talon, and carry off a limb of another republic!

Since I adjusted the affair between Lord Orford and Cav. Mozzi, I have heard nothing of Mr. Morrice, who was then at Ischia, and better, and, as he always is, whether better or worse, in good spirits.

Pray, madam, revere Uncle Methusalem; Lord Euston makes the fifty-sixth of my nephews, nieces, and great nephews and nieces. Two Fitzroys will not stop the lengthening of the line, if it does not break off at the other end!

LETTER CCLXVII.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 20, 1784.

In obedience to your ladyship's commands, I write a few words. I certainly cannot disapprove anything you say on the present occasion. Much less do I disagree with you in thinking that any fervour on your ladyship's part would but do hurt. Indeed, the only part I take myself is to recommend perfect silence, which I shall strictly observe myself. I told Lady Euston my opinion, as it was my duty; both when she told me of the proposal, and when I thought it entirely broken off. When anything is over, though

contrary to one's opinion, good nature, as well as good sense, bids one take the favourable side. My disposition always inclines me to be partial to young people and young passions; and, therefore, it was no effort to exchange prudence for kind wishes. Mine are so very barren, that I am not even likely to see them fulfilled, should they ever be!

I could only vary my expressions, madam, if I wrote more on this subject; nor should I have said so much but to you. When one can do no service, silence is the only *succedaneum*.

LETTER CCLXVIII.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 9, 1784.

I CAN answer Lady Anne's salique query very easily, madam, or rather I cannot; but I believe that, even when Edward VI. died, there was not a single prince living who descended in the direct male line from any king since the Conquest. Numerous as were the sons of Edward III., only Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, continued the masculine line, and I cannot (upon memory alone) affirm that. If he did, the Duke of Buckingham, beheaded by Henry VIII., had, *saliquely* speaking, the best title to the Crown. The Beauforts are doubly illegitimate, being descended from a bastard of one of John of Ghent's legitimated issue. I doubt, therefore, whether, enacting the salique

law here would not, in any period, have been a dangerous measure; at least, I know nowhere of an uninterrupted male genealogy of genuine princes but in Wales; and it would occasion an inundation of civil wars, before the Heralds' Office could settle which Mr. Price, or which Mr. Williams, or which Mr. Philipps, is the genuine heir of our true British princes. I am sure I do not mean to arrogate a right in myself, nor pretend to say how near I stand to the Crown; but I have a pedigree of my mother, drawn up by the late Sir John Philipps, my cousin, and father of the present Lord Milford, in which it is clear that we are descended from Cadwallader. I really do not believe Sir John had any ambitious views himself, for, though he gave himself all that trouble, I believe it was only meant as a compliment to his cousin, the wife of the then prime-minister, or, at most, a hint to her that so noble a prince ought to be, at least, a commissioner of the customs; and I am the more inclined to acquit his royal highness, my cousin, of any intention of disturbing the established succession from personal views, as (from no resentment, I believe, for not obtaining a place in the Custom-house) he became a very zealous and active Jacobite, and, at last, died in very good odour with his present Majesty.

Thus you see, madam, whichever way I turn myself, I have royal or Fitzroyal connections; and yet, however beneficial it might be to me and my relations on Cadwallader's side, I cannot come into your ladyship's

scheme of a salique law here. At least I hope you will repeal the marriage act first—for two reasons; one, that our present princes may have as many lawful male heirs as possible; and the other, that our princesses may not be forced to scamper to Gretna Green, in order to supply the crown with heirs,—which they would not do, if their children were not *habile* to succeed.

I luckily arrived in town the eve of dreadful yesterday. I came for my *waiting* to-night in Cavendish Square, and did mean to return to Strawberry to-morrow, and thence go on Saturday to Park Place; but since Boreas and Æolus, and all the demons of the air are let loose, I shall keep myself as warm as I can, and not venture being laid up with the gout and compounded in snow as I was some years ago at Ampthill, and then forced to have a track hewn for me by the charity of my hosts.

May I beg to consult your ladyship on a case of conscience? I think I ought to wait on Lady Ravensworth on a late event; and yet I am so afraid of doing a wrong or seemingly impertinent thing, that I have not ventured yet. Pray tell me seriously whether I should or not.

I have neither seen the Carmelite nor Holman, nor anything, or almost anybody else. You don't consider that I was a contemporary of Dugdale and Ashmole, that I am or ought to be superannuated, and that I know no more of the present generation, than if Deucalion and Pyrrha had just tossed them over

their shoulders and restocked the earth. Alas! I have lost most of those that used to inhabit it in my days! and a teacup full of deluge would wash me away too.

LETTER CCLXIX.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 27, 1784.

I AM told that I am in a prodigious fine way; which, being translated into plain English, means, that I have suffered more sharp pain these two days than in all the moderate fits together that I have had for these last nine years: however, madam, I have one great blessing, there is drowsiness in all the square hollows of the red hot bars of the gridiron on which I lie, so that I scream and fall asleep by turns like a babe that is cutting its first teeth. I can add nothing to this exact account, which I only send in obedience to your ladyship's commands, which I received just now: I did think on Saturday that the worst was over.

LETTER CCLXX.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 3, 1785.

I AM much obliged to your ladyship and Lord Ossory: I am essentially better, and quite contented, for my pains are gone. It is not so easy to recover what I had not, strength; and, consequently, I am as low and languid as possible; but having no occasion for myself, I am very indifferent about the little progress I make. I return your ladyship's new year's compliments with wishes, I hope, better founded.

LETTER CCLXXI.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 16, 1785.

I AM always thanking you, madam, I think, for kind inquiries after me; but it is not my fault that I am so often troublesome! I would it were otherwise! —however, I do not complain. I have attained another resurrection; and was so glad of my liberty, that I went out both Saturday and Sunday, though so snowy a day and so rainy a day never were invented. Yet I have not ventured to see Mrs. Jordan, nor to skate in Hyde Park. We had other guess winters in my time!—fine sunny mornings, with now and then a mild earthquake, just enough to wake one, and rock one to sleep again comfortably. My recoveries surprise me more than my fits; but I am quite persuaded now that I know ex-

actly how I shall end: as I am a statue of chalk, I shall crumble to powder, and then my inside will be blown away from my terrace, and hoary-headed Margaret will tell the people that come to see my house,—

"One morn we miss'd him on the 'custom'd hill."

When that is the case, madam, don't take the pains of inquiring more—as I shall leave no *body* to return to, even Cagliostro would bring me back to no purpose: by the way, is not it curious, that when credulity and superstition are so far exploded that even a cardinal is abandoned by bishops and clergy, and left to the civil power, there should still be dupes to such a mountebank as Cagliostro? I have been told that Prince Ferdinand himself had faith in him. I know that our late King, though not apt to believe more than his neighbours, had no doubt of the existence of vampires and their banquets on the dead. Dr. Johnson seems to have been the representative in epitome of all the contradictions in human nature.

Your ladyship may be sure I am happy in Lady Euston's good fortune, not only in the duke's being reconciled, but in obtaining Lady Ravensworth's favourable opinion. It has always been mine, that her paternal understanding and temper would pierce at last through all clouds. She still in my eyes wants one essential boon from fortune to complete her felicity; and though I may not live to see that moment, I hope your ladyship will then allow that I gave a just character of her, when I could have no idea of what has happened since.

Most of the diversions that I have given up, cost me no regrets; but I own I should have enjoyed the play at Ampthill: indeed you might have made me a little amends by sending me the *Prologue* or *Epilogue*, instead of a charade which I shall never guess. In revenge, here is one, which I hope you will all find as uncrackable: General Conway, who never rests till he has mastered one, miscarried: "*ma première partie fait aller, ma seconde fait reculer, mon tout fait rire et pleurer.*"

General Burgoyne's "Heiress," I hear, succeeded extremely well, and was, besides, excellently acted. Have you had patience, madam, to wade through Mr. Hayley's "Old Maids?" I could not; and can you guess why he wrote them, unless to sell *three* volumes? That sot Boswell is a classic in comparison.

You know to be sure, madam, that Lady Brudenel is dead; every body laments her, for she was perfectly unexceptionable. I have lost a very old friend, one of my oldest, and a most worthy man, Lord Dacre; but after forty years of miserable sufferings, his death was charming, and not two hours in duration from his seizure. We who are dead in equity, though not in law, should hope for such conclusions, and have former preludes discounted.

Sir William Hamilton, I am told, has been probing Vesuvius, and announces a more dreadful explosion than ever. Lord and Lady Spencer have ascended the mountain, while the lava boiled over the opposite brim. I should have no thirst for such bumpers.

My hand, you see, madam, has obeyed you very de-

bonairly ; I am sorry I had no better materials. I have straws enough, but I don't find that I have good brick.

P.S. I am not such a *blockhead* as I thought I was : I believe *that* is the key to your charade. My French one is as just.

LETTER CCLXXII.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 5, 1785.

I HAVE not written lately, madam, because I relapsed and have been so very ill, the gout falling on my lungs, that I did not know whether before my letter could set out for Ampthill, I should not be obliged to add a postscript from another world, and send you a new direction ; but I am recovered, and have even been out twice to take the air. This time indeed my recovery was a little artificial, and not entirely owing to my own management and to my Herculean weakness. Sir John Elliot had happened to attend my housemaid, and would not take a fee ; to prevail, I pretended to talk on my own gout, and he was so tractable, and suffered me to prescribe to him what he should prescribe to me, without giving me powder of volcanos and other hot drugs, that I continued to see him ; and I do believe, that at the crisis, I should not have conducted myself quite so judiciously as he did. This is making very honourable *amende* to the college whom I have always treated with contempt ; but as I love my own veracity still more than my own way, I do not haggle about confessing the truth.

As I don't know that your ladyship is particularly devoted to Hippocrates, perhaps I have tired you by my recantation; but I had nothing of more worth to tell you, and only wrote to excuse my silence.

Your aunt, Lady Dowager Gower, is dying of a similar accident to poor Lady Strafford's, in whom the mortification is said to be begun. As much as I shall pity Lord Strafford, it is impossible to be sorry for her. She had burnt off one ear, part of the other, and was likely to lose one of her eyes.

The news of my coffee-house, since I began my letter, is, that Lady Strathmore eloped last night, taking her two maids with her; but no swain is talked of. The town, they say, is empty: it certainly does not produce its usual complement of extravagances, when one solitary elopement of a veteran madwoman is all that is at market.

LETTER CCLXXIII.

Berkeley Square, June 7, 1785.

THOUGH you had declared yourself on the wing, madam, you took your flight before I was aware, or I should have attempted to make you a parting bow. People, who *have* paid their bills, are not apt to fly from town so rapidly. You have time to cool, indeed, perhaps not to dry yourselves, for June, that is not often in debt for rain, seems likely to discharge all his arrears. I question, however, whether a deluge will replace the leaves before the midsummer shoots: the

tops of all my elms are as naked as in the first days of November; chaffers and nabobs, I mean caterpillars, have stripped them stark.

Mr. B. wrote, I conclude, when he was mad or drunk, probably the latter, for he seems to have had sober intervals enough to flatter every man who is or may be a Minister; his advertisement is of a piece with Miss Bellamy's.

The poor milkwoman's poetry is published, and the charity, I imagine, equal whether by subscribing or buying the book. She seems to have a conscious dignity of mind, which I like better than her verses, and which is a greater rarity than middling poets or even than middling poetesses; I am a little sick of the Hayleys and Miss Sewards, who are like common milkwomen who borrow tankards and flowers of all their acquaintance for Mayday.

You tell me, madam, that you only wrote to receive a letter; you do receive only your own letter back again, paragraph by paragraph. In truth I am superannuated, and know nothing, do nothing, am fit for nothing. I have been three days alone at Strawberry, and nowhere else but to dine at Gunnersbury last Friday, with the Conways, Harcourts, Mount Edgcumbes, and Mrs. Howe. I expected that Lady Harcourt would every now and then say *your Majesty* instead of *your Royal Highness*. My lord, too, is quite Count Castiglione, the perfect courtier. General Conway, who never remembers what anybody is or was, asked him, on speaking of Handel's music at Westminster Abbey, whether his

lordship had been in waiting! concluding he was a lord of the bedchamber.

This is all my journal contains, madam; but what better can you expect from a Strulbrug? and one so insipid as to be content with being so? Nay, it is not an unpleasant state. Having outlived all one's passions and pursuits, and not having acquired avarice in lieu, one sits down tranquilly like an old sailor that has been in many storms, and sees the crowd bustling and jostling, or playing the fool, and feels the comfort of idleness and indifference, and the holiday luxury of having nothing to do. Don't you think the retired tradesman, whose journal is in the "Spectator," was a happy being? He played with his cat, and strolled to Mother Redcap's, if the weather was fair, and had no uneasiness, but when his friend the politician (I forget his name) prognosticated war. There I am happier: I am past and below political apprehensions, and have so little time left, that the events of all futurity might as well disturb my imagination, as, perhaps, the next that are to happen. Even returns of pain, of which I have suffered so much, have little terror for me: I cannot feel a quarter of what I have felt, I mean in point of duration; and should they be violent, I have not strength to struggle with them. But I beg your pardon, madam, though I can but smile with thinking how you will be disappointed on receiving, instead of a letter, the reflections of a Strulbrug on his own inanity. When Swift drew the character, he did not know it. Poor man! the turbulence of his own temper, and the

apprehensions of his own decay, made him conceive it as a miserable condition: on the contrary, it is almost a gay one, when one can be sensible of it, and of all its enjoyments. I would tell you more of it, madam, if it were capable of any variety; but as its uniformity is one of its felicities, you people of the world who have no taste for sameness, would not be diverted with the particulars. To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow—all alike. Tonton is as principal an actor as the tradesman's cat; but he has more vivacity, though he is not mad, as your ladyship apprehended, when he bit Lord Ossory's finger; indeed, he can bite but little more than your obedient servant, his master.

LETTER CCLXXIV.

Strawberry Hill, June 20, 1785.

I GIVE your ladyship a thousand thanks for the crown of laurel you sent me: I tried it on immediately; but it certainly was never made for me; it was a vast deal too big, and did not fit me at all; it must have been designed for one of double my size. Besides, as I never wear so much as a hat, it would make my head ache—and then, too, as nobody in the village has worn a sprig of laurel since Mr. Pope's death, good Lord! how my neighbours would stare, if I should appear with a chaplet, to which I have no more title than Lord de Ferrers to the Earldom of Leicester. I will not be such a bear as to send back your ladyship's favor; but

if you would give me leave to present it to poor Mr. Hayley, or Mr. Cumberland, who ruin themselves in new laurels every day, it would make them as happy as princes; and I dare answer that either of them would write an ode upon you, not quite so good perhaps, yet within a hundred thousand degrees as excellent as Major Scott's, and at least better than Mr. Warton's. However, though I am no poet, yet I don't know what I may come to, if I live. I have just written the life of a young lady in verse; in which, perhaps, I have too much affected brevity, though had I chosen to spin it out by a number of proper names, more falsehoods, and a tolerable quantity of anachronisms, there was matter enough to have furnished as many volumes as Miss Bellamy's Memoirs. Mine I have comprised in these four lines—

Patty was a pretty maid;
Patty was of men afraid;
Patty grew her fears to lose,
And grew so brave, she lost her nose.

As the world is now so overstocked with anecdotes, I don't know whether it will not be advisable for future English biographers to aim at my conciseness, and confine themselves to quatrains. Dr. Johnson's history, though he is going to have as many lives as a cat, might be reduced to four lines; but I shall wait, to extract the quintessence, till Sir John Hawkins, Madame Piozzi, and Mr. Boswell, have produced their quartos. Apropos, madam, t'other night I was sitting with Mrs. Vesey; there was very little light; arrived Sir Joshua Reynolds, and a person whom I took for

Mr. Boswell. I sewed up my mouth, and, though he addressed me two or three times, I answered nothing but yes or no. Just as he was going away, I found out that it was Mr. Richard Burke, and endeavoured to repair my causticity. I am not quite in charity with Sir Joshua; he desired to come and see my marvellous Henry VII.; when he saw it, he said, "It is in the old hard Flemish manner." For hard, it is so bold, that it is one of the great reasons for doubting its antiquity; and for Flemish, there is nothing Flemish in it, except a *chiaro scuro*, as masterly as Rubens's; but it is not surprising that Sir Joshua should dislike colouring that has lasted so long!

I went last week to see a new piece, by O'Keeffe, my favourite author, next to Major Scott. Harry Fox was in the box. I asked him if he had ever seen "The Agreeable Surprise;" he said no; I cried it up to the heavens. He was much surprised at "The Beggar on Horseback," and asked me if "The Beggar on Horseback" was like "The Agreeable Surprise." The new piece is very low, to be sure, and yet it diverted me; but you know I like extremes, and next to perfect wit, perfect nonsense, when it is original A sort of folly I do not admire is air-balloons; but I believe their reign is over. They say, Monsieur Pilatrier and another man have been burnt to cinders, and Mr. Sadler has not been heard of yet.

The old, mad, drunken Duke of Norfolk is going to be married again to a Miss Eld, who is forty years old and a Protestant.

Tuesday.

I could not finish my letter yesterday, for Lord Sandwich, who was to breakfast with me, arrived sooner than I expected. He brought Mr. Noble with him, the author of the History of the Cromwells, and Mr. Selwyn came to dinner with us, and the latter stayed all night. Lord Sandwich has taken the patronage of Mr. Noble, as Hinchinbrook was the residence of Oliver, and the second edition will be much more accurate and curious than the first. I could but look with admiration at the earl, who at our age can enter so warmly into any pursuits and find them amusing! It is pleasant to have such spirits, that after going through such busy political scenes, he can be diverted with carrying a white wand at Handel's jubilee, and for two years together! Do you think Lord Lansdowne would be content with being master of the ceremonies at Bath? The papers tell a different story from mine of poor Pilatrier's exit. I hope it will prevent Mr. Fitzpatrick * from such an expedition. It would be silly to break one's neck in going no whither; don't you think so, madam?

LETTER CCLXXV.

Strawberry Hill, June 30, 1785.

"Icarus Icariis nomina fecit aquis."

THANKS to the powers of the air that Mr. Fitzpatrick has not new-christened the Thame or the Isis!

* Colonel Fitzpatrick went up alone in a balloon, from Oxford; he had engaged to go with Mr. Sadler, but just at the time of starting, it was found to be unfit for two.—ED.

nor dyed the Saxon White Horse black! Why did he ascend from Oxford? He should have left the laureate to get another fall from the *White Horse.* Mr. Fitzpatrick had given ample proofs of his spirit before, and therefore I hope he will now lie on his arms.

As to me, madam, if I gathered a chaplet and crowned myself, at least your ladyship planted the tree, of which I plucked a branch. You did not utter the words *crown of laurel;* but you did say, I was *reposing under my own laurels,* therefore I may justly plead with our prime ancestor, that *the woman tempted me and I did eat;* yet I did not swallow a leaf—but no more of that.

I can make as just a defence on my omission of Lord Barrington, of which here is the simple narrative. As he was an obscure Presbyterian writer, I had never heard of him when I published my first edition. Being then told of him, I asked his son, the present lord, for a list of his works. His lordship, conscious that his parent, who had been a great rogue, had better be forgotten, desired as a favour, that I would *not* repair the omission, and therefore I did not. His brother the Bishop of Salisbury, who was not so discreet, and who did not like to lose the authorship out of the genealogy, inserted his father's life in the "New Biographia," and in grateful return for my "*noli prosequi,*" ascribed the punishment of his own father's knavery to an act of revenge in mine. In short, the late Lord Barrington was expelled the House of Commons for being concerned in a gross bubble called the *Hamburgh*

Lottery; and the bishop pretends (which his father himself never did) that the expulsion was procured by Sir Robert Walpole, because Lord Barrington, who twice sold the Presbyterians to the Court, had been attached to Lord Sunderland. Lord Barrington, in the next editions of the Royal and Noble authors, will find his proper place, though he did not in the first edition—nor in the pillory. I beg you will send for a new book called "Letters of Literature," by Robert Heron, Esq. It is an extraordinary work, in which there is a variety of knowledge and a great mixture of parts. There are several things to which I do not at all agree; others much to my mind; but which will not be popular. I never heard of *Robert Heron* before, but he does not seem to design to remain in obscurity, nor averse to literary warfare, whence I conclude he is young; and you will see from every page, madam, that he will not want antagonists.

I have been for two or three days in town, where I heard two Hessian French horns, who are reckoned supereminent. They are as reasonable as March, the tooth-drawer; they ask *but* ten guineas for an evening. I heard, too, what diverted me more, an impertinence of Mr. Hastings when he was last in England. Lord Huntingdon, by way of acknowledging him, told him he believed they were related—"No, my lord," said Hastings, "I am descended from Hastings, Earl of Pembroke," meaning that he was of the elder branch. Judge how the blood of Clarence boiled! "I thought," said the earl, "that there were no descendants of that

branch left but the Marchioness of Grey," and turned on his heel. I wish he had replied, "I thought *you* were only of the branch of green Hastings."

I am now settled on my hill a melancholy widower; Lady Browne has left Twickenham. As she was my newsmonger, I shall know even less than I used to do. All this morning I have been busy in placing Henry VII. in the state bed-chamber, and making a new arrangement of pictures. It is really a very royal chamber now and much improved. Besides the family of Henry VIII. over the chimney as before, and Queen Maintenon over one of the doors, there are Henry VII. and Catherine of Braganza on one side of the bed; Henry VIII. and Henriette Duchess of Orleans on the other. There will be a much prettier room soon at the other end of the village; Lady Di. is painting another, with small pictures framed with wreaths of flowers

"—— Flowers worthy of Paradise!"

there is already a wreath of honeysuckles, surpassing her own lilacs, and such as she only could paint and Milton describe; and there is a baby Bacchus so drunk! and so pretty! borne in triumph by bacchanalian Cupids. Twickenham does not vie with the pomps of Stowe, but, like the modest violet, *qui se cachoit sous l'herbe*, has its humble sweets.

LETTER CCLXXVI.

Strawberry Hill, Monday night, July 4, 1785.

I WRITE again so quickly, madam, not to detain Mr. Fitzpatrick's letter, for which I give you many thanks, and which you must value as it is so very sensible and unaffected an account of his aerial jaunt, and deserves to be preserved in your Milesian archives ;* for, whether aerostation becomes a professional art, or is given up with the prosecution of the Tower of Babel and other invasions on the coast of Heaven, an original letter under the hand of the first airgonauts will always be a precious curiosity.

I have just been reading a work by a new noble authoress, a princess of the blood of Clarence, and a lady deeply versed in the antiquities of the country where the great Brian Mac Gill Patrick was seated, as well as of the Phœnicians, Egyptians, Gauls, &c. It is the present Countess of Moira, whose letter to her son is in the new seventh volume of the "Archæologia," and gives an account of a skeleton and its habiliments lately discovered in the county of Down and barony of Linalearty.

Oh! but I have better news for you, madam, if you have any patriotism as a citizen of this world and wish its longevity. Mr. Herschell has found out that our globe is a comely middle-aged personage, and has not so many wrinkles as several stars, who are evidently

* I am sorry it is not, at least, I cannot find it.—ED.

our seniors. Nay, he has discovered that the milky way is not only a mob of stars, but that there is another dairy of them still farther off, whence, I conclude, comets are nothing but pails returning from milking, instead of balloons filled with inflammable air, which must by this time have made terrible havoc in such thickets of worlds, if at all dangerous; now I shall descend, as if out of a balloon, from the heavens to the milkwoman. It is no doubt extraordinary that the poor soul should write tolerably; but, when she can write tolerably, is not it extraordinary that a Miss Seward should write no better? I am sick of these sweet singers, and advised that when poor Mrs. Yearsley shall have been set at her ease by the subscription, she should drive her cows from the foot of Parnassus and hum no more ditties. For Chatterton, he was a gigantic genius, and might have soared I know not whither. In the poems, avowed for his, is a line, that Rowley nor all the monks in Christendom could or would have written, and which would startle them all for its depth of thought and comprehensive expression from a lad of eighteen—

"Reason a thorn in Revelation's side!"

I will read no more of Rousseau; his confessions disgusted me beyond any book I ever opened. His hen, the schoolmistress, Madame de Genlis, the newspapers say, is arrived in London. I nauseate her too; the eggs of education that both he and she laid, could not be hatched till the chickens would be ready to die

of old age. I revere genius; I have a dear friendship for common sense; I have a partiality for professed nonsense; but I abhor extravagance, that is given for the quintessence of sense, and affectation that pretends to be philosophy. Good night, madam!

P.S. Pray tell me where your new library is placed. The parson of Teddington and his wife were robbed, at half an hour after nine last night, by three footpads, with pistols, at my back gate. My housekeeper heard the bustle from her room that is over the Holbein chamber. I was in the library, but knew nothing of the matter till to-day. It is agreeable to have banditti at one's doors!

LETTER CCLXXVII.

Strawberry Hill, July 9, 1785.

I AM sorry Lord Ossory has any Irish difficulties, great or small.

I made no commentary on General Oglethorpe's death, madam, because his very long life was the great curiosity, and the moment he is dead the rarity is over; and, as he was but ninety-seven, he will not be a prodigy compared with those who reached to a century and a half. He is like many who make a noise in their own time from some singularity, which is forgotten, when it comes to be registered with others of the same genus, but more extraordinary in their kind. How little will Dr. Johnson be remembered,

when confounded with the mass of authors of his own calibre!

I said no more on the Duchess of Bedford's broken wrist, because I did not know of it. The Duchess of Montrose told me she was said to have broken her leg, but that it was not true; and that she had given a public breakfast the next day, but did not appear at it herself, so I concluded she had only miscarried of a broken leg; but ah! madam, when old folks break their wrists by tottering out of their own houses, is not it a just reason for my not daring to think of clambering up ladders, to range books, at Ampthill, though I should have more pleasure in it than the Duchess could have at a ball at five in the morning. I could delight, too, in playing with Lady Anne's orrery, and I could prattle on the planet that rolled under your ladyship's feet; but when I am sensible of the lameness of my feet, why should I be more indulgent to my head? I talked nonsense enough on astronomy in my last, and I will not again violate a maxim that I have laid down to myself, and which I believe so true, that it ought to be repeated daily to old people, like Saladin's "Remember thou art mortal!" This is my maxim, "When a man's eyes, ears, or memory decay, he ought to conclude that his understanding decays, too, for the weaker it grows, the less likely he is to perceive it."

When you send for Mr. Heron's book, you may write too for the seventh volume of the Archæologia, in which you will find a few pages amusing, amongst several that

don't know their own meaning. I early translated the title of these volumes, *old women's logic*, and seldom do they contradict me—witness the first dissertation in the present, *cum multis aliis;* but there is a very sensible discourse, p. 303, on the religion of the Druids, in which the writer, unlike his companions, demolishes fantastic reverence for barbarians, instead of discovering arts and sciences amongst rude nations, who had nothing but labour and time to spare, and who put one in mind of Lord Abercorn's answer to the gentleman who complimented him on the growth of his trees, "they had nothing else to do." I have lately dipped into D'Ancarville's two volumes, in which he ascribes universal knowledge and invention to the Scythians, as Bryant did to the Lord knows whom; but with all my pertinacity in reading quartos, I could not wade through the tautology and impertinence of D'Ancarville's, though he has lately been here to draw a bronze I have of Ceres, with a bull in her lap; and because I have this ugly morsel, I suppose he will call me *the ingenious and learned*, as Mr. Daines Barrington does; and I had rather they would box my ears, for it is calling one a fool that has taken his degrees. Now I declare I have no more regard for the Phœnicians, Pelasgians, Vics, Egyptians, Edomites, Scythians, and Gentoos, than I have for Madame de Genlis. I read such books as I do Mrs. Bellamy's, and believe in them no more. The one nation worth studying was the Greeks. In the compass of two or three centuries half a dozen little towns, or rather one town, scarce

bigger than Brentford, discovered the standard of poetry, eloquence, statuary, architecture, and perhaps of painting and music; and then *the learned* have the impertinence to tell one that the Grecians borrowed from the Egyptians, Tartars, Indians, &c. That is, they stole the genuine principles of all beauty and all taste from every idea of deformity and absurdity! The Apollo and the Venus from mummies and idols with four heads, more hands, and two legs, as immovable as oaks in an avenue! I concenter my admiration in the few centuries of Greece, and for that marvellous period in the Roman history, when five excellent princes, though possessed of absolute power, succeeded to one another, Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines. This is not learning: the learned are busied in inquiring how long the world has blundered without discovering what was worth knowing.

Sunday.

P.S. After writing my letter, I learnt that by the new arrangement of the post, it would only have lain in town, and could not depart the same night as usual. When I came from Lady Dysart's last night, I found on my table the annual "Transactions *de l'Academie* of Arts and Sciences," in which the gold medal to our lord is recorded; and his gardener's letter, which says he could not make Lombardy poplars grow in wet ground. The lawn beyond my flower-garden was a morass, that I was forced to have drained, yet before the drains were made, Lombardy poplars grew there astonishingly; and the first I ever saw

in England General Conway planted at the foot of his mountain, close to the Thames, and in three years it was of an amazing height.

LETTER CCLXXVIII.

Strawberry Hill, July 23, 1785.

I AM very sorry to hear that the war of bad seasons, which has lasted eight months, has affected your ladyship too. I never knew so much illness; but as our natural season, rain, is returned, I hope you will recover from your complaints. English consumptions are attributed to our insular damps, but I question whether justly. The air of the sea is an elixir, not a poison; and in the three sultry summers which preceded the three last, it is notorious that our fruits were uncommonly bad, as if they did not know how to behave in hot weather. Nay, it is certain, that in our camps there was scarce any sickness when the tents were swimming; whereas in those Italian summers the contrary was fact. I hope I shall not be contradicted by the experience of last night. Mrs. Keppel had, or rather was to have had all London at her beautiful villa at Isleworth. Her Grace of Devonshire was to have been there, ay, you may stare, madam! and her Grace of Bedford too. The deluge in the morning, the debate in the House of Commons, qualms in the first duchess, and I don't know what, certainly not *qualms* in the second, detained them, and no soul came from town

but Lady Duncannon, Lady Beauchamp, the two Miss Vernons, the Boltons, the Norths, Lord William Russell, Charles Wyndham, Colonel Gardiner, and Mr. Aston, and none of these arrived till ten at night. Violins were ready, but could not play to no dancers; so at eleven the young people said it was a charming night, and went to paddle on the terrace over the river, while we ancients, to affect being very hot too, sat with all the windows in the bow open, and might as well have been in Greenland! Miss Vernon did not know her brother was set out.

You surprise me, madam, by saying the newspapers mention my disappointment of seeing Madame de Genlis. How can such arrant trifles spread? It is very true, that as the hill would not go to see Madame de Genlis, she has come to see the hill. Ten days ago Mrs. Cosway sent me a note that *madame* desired a ticket for Strawberry Hill. I thought I could not do less than offer her a breakfast, and named yesterday se'nnight. Then came a message that she must go to Oxford and take her doctor's degree; and then another, that I should see her yesterday, when she did arrive with Miss Wilkes and Pamela, whom she did not even present to me, and whom she has educated to be very like herself in the face. I told her I could not attribute the honour of her visit but to my late dear friend Madame du Deffand. It rained the whole time, and was dark as midnight, so that she could scarce distinguish a picture; but you will want an account of her, and not of what she saw or could not see. Her person

is agreeable, and she seems to have been pretty. Her conversation is natural and reasonable, not *precieuse* and affected, and searching to be eloquent, as I had expected. I asked her if she had been pleased with Oxford, meaning the buildings, not the wretched oafs that inhabit it. She said she had had little time; that she had wished to learn their plan of education, which, as she said sensibly, she supposed was adapted to our Constitution. I could have told her that it is directly repugnant to our Constitution, and that nothing is taught there but drunkenness and prerogative, or, in their language, Church and King. I asked if it is true that the new edition of Voltaire's works is prohibited: she replied, severely,—and then condemned those who write against religion and government, which was a little unlucky before her friend *Miss Wilkes*. She stayed two hours, and returns to France to-day *to her duty*. I really do not know whether the Duc de Chartres is in England or not. She did lodge in his house in Portland Place; but at Paris, I think, has a hotel where she educates his daughters.

Mr. Horace Walpole (not myself) called on me yesterday morning, when no will of the Duchess of Portland had been found. He thinks the bulk of the collection will be sold, but that the duke will reserve the principal curiosities: I hope so, for I should long for some of them, and am become too poor to afford them; besides that, it is ridiculous to treat one's self with playthings, when one's eyes are closing.

I hope the visit to Lady Ravensworth and fresh grass will restore your ladyship's health and looks. I send this response to Ampthill as you have given me no direction.

LETTER CCLXXIX.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 10, 1785.

I WAS just getting into my chaise with Mr. Jerningham to go to Park Place on Friday, when I received the honour of your ladyship's letter, and consequently could not answer it so punctually as I generally do. We saw the new bridge at Henley, which is complete on one side, and is most beautiful; the bend of the arch was regulated by General Conway himself, on three centres, and for grace does not veil the bonnet to the Ponte di Trinità at Florence. His daughter's head of the Thame is placed, and has charming effect. The Isis is fixed too, but not yet uncovered. They are going, not the Thame and Isis, but the father and daughter, with the Duke of Richmond to Jersey, and I hope the sea air will be of service to her, for I think her far from well.

I had heard, madam, of Lady Euston's felicity in being agreeable to Lady Ravensworth, and my niece being charmed with her ladyship. This was no flattery, for it came to me indirectly from a letter to her sister Horatia. Indeed I trust that Lady Euston's calm temper and good sense, which resemble her father's, will always answer to the character I have

constantly given of her, and which is just the reverse of what that Tisiphone Lady Greenwich coined for her —or rather lent her from her own superabundant fund of bad qualities.

I have heard since my return, that Sir William Hamilton's renowned vase, which had disappeared with so much mystery, is again discovered; not in the tomb, but in the treasury of the Duchess of Portland, in which I fancy it had made ample room for itself. He told me, it would never go out of England. I do not see how he could warrant that. The Duke and Lord Edward have both shewn how little stability there is in the riches of that family; and *mine* has felt how insecure the permanency of heir looms! Lawyers, though so like in many points, are, in respect of their own code, the reverse of churchmen, and set it aside just as they please.

A mightier potentate, who sets aside codes, too, without ceremony, is going to sell part of his plunder by auction at Brussels. I have seen the catalogues of the jewels and pictures that are to be sold; and I took the trouble of counting them. Of pictures there are above three hundred and thirty; yet, by some numbers left in the margin, it looks as if there were not half a quarter of the forfeitures, though I can scarce believe that his Imperial rapacity loves the arts better than money. Sir Joshua Reynolds is gone to see them; yet there are but three of Rubens, two of Vandyck, one of Snyder, and half a dozen of Jordan. The rest are of old Flemish masters, and most being

large altar pieces and too big for private houses, I should think would not sell well. It is said that the Catholics will not purchase such sacrilegious goods; but we virtuosos are seldom so scrupulous.

Of pearls there are more than seventeen thousand, probably small; and four thousand and six hundred diamonds, all roses, besides table diamonds. I used to imagine that most of the precious stones one sees in churches were false, concluding priests were too wise to lose the interest of their treasures. However, this sale confirms a contradictory opinion that I formed long ago; which was, that the bushels of diamonds, rubies, and pearls, with which the portraits of Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth are so gorgeously decked, had been embezzled from convents. The present profusion will lower their own value.

Cæsar is said to have already realized three millions sterling by the suppression of monachism; and by that wealth he will purchase a deluge of blood! *Such reformers* make one regret Popery! Indeed, Mother Reformation herself was too dearly purchased. Had I been Luther, and been really conscientious, which I doubt whether he was, and could have foreseen by what torrents of gore the Church was to be purified, I should have asked myself whether, for the benefit of any number of future millions of souls, I had a right to occasion the slaughter of a present million of lives; I should have hesitated on my mission, and I believe not have taken out my patent.

I have been told that when this Austrian bird of

prey set about his reform, the nobility of Flanders presented a memorial to him, observing that most of the monastic had not been royal foundations, and therefore they hoped from his Imperial equity that he would restore to the respective families the lands which their ancestors had given away from their posterity to the Church. Cæsar made no reply, for he could make none that had common sense—but he did not seize an acre or a ducat the less.

Don't imagine that I am changing sides, madam, because I have some *high church* qualms. It is laudable to suppress convents; but it ought to be done by forbidding any more persons to be professed. It is inhuman to turn those adrift who either entered conscientiously, or are too old to seek a new livelihood by new professions. Besides, when those dear friends the Crown and the Church fall out, I adhere to the latter. Priests get their wealth or power by sense and address; monarchs by force and bloodshed: I am for sharpers against cut-throats.

LETTER CCLXXX.

Aug. 29, 1785.

It is flattering, and too flattering to me, madam, to be supposed the author of the "Letters of Literature." The writer has much more variety of knowledge, and of useful knowledge, and a sounder understanding than I have; though I do not think that even thirty years ago I should have written so rashly as he has done, nor so

fantastically. Far was it ever from my thoughts to admire Dr. Akenside, (and to commend him in a work that excommunicates imitators!) or to depreciate Boileau, or not to think Moliere a genius of the first water. Who upon earth has written such perfect comedies! for the "Careless Husband" is but one—the "Nonjuror" was built on the "Tartuffe;" and if the "Man of Mode" and "Vanbrugh" are excellent, they are too indelicate—and Congreve, who beats all for wit, is not always natural; still less, simple. In fact I disagree with Mr. Heron, as often as I subscribe to him; and though I am an enthusiast to original genius, I cannot forget that there are two classes of authors to be venerated; they who invent, and they who perfect: who has been so original as to exclude improvements?

Well, madam, but I not only am not the author of the Letters, but, *upon my veracity*, I never saw a line of them, nor knew such a work was in embryo, till it was left at my house in full impression.

Should a doubt remain with any man, (your ladyship I flatter myself will not question my truth,) I will give him an irrecusable proof of my not having had a hand in these letters, if he will have patience to wait for it; and that is, that the author will write better than he has done twenty years after I shall be underground. In short, it is a capacity that will improve by maturity, for it will be corrected by opponents; if it is not hardened into the defence of paradoxes by defending them too ingeniously; as was the misfortune of Rousseau, who might have excelled by writing good sense, but found

that there was a shorter path to celebrity, by climbing the precipice of absurdity.

I cannot make the same excuse for the pious editors of Dr. Johnson's prayers: see what it is to have friends too honest! How could men be such idiots as to execute such a trust? One laughs at every page, and then the tears come into one's eyes when one learns what the poor being suffered, who even suspected his own madness? One seems to be reading the diary of an old almswoman; and, in fact, his religion was not a step higher in its kind. Johnson had all the bigotry of a monk, and all the folly and ignorance too. He sets himself penances of reading two hundred verses of the Bible per day; proposes to learn high Dutch and Italian at past sixty, and at near seventy *begins* to think of examining the proofs (p. 160) of that religion which he had believed so implicitly. So anile was his faith, that on a fast-day he reproaches himself with putting a little milk into his coffee inadvertently! Can one check a smile when, in his old age, one might say his dotage, he tried to read Vossius on baptism?—No wonder he could only *try!*—but one laughs out, when about a dozen years before his death, he confesses he had never yet read the "Apocrypha," though when a boy he had heard the story of *Bel and the Dragon.* I wonder he did not add, and of "Jack the Giant-killer"—for such blind faith might easily have confounded the impressions of his first childhood, which lasted uninterrupted to his second.

Methinks this specimen, and "Rousseau's Confes-

sions," should be lessons against keeping journals, which poor Johnson thought such an excellent nostrum for a good life. How foolish might we all appear, if we registered every delirium! Johnson certainly had strong sense at intervals—of how little use was it to himself!—but what drivellers are his disciples, who think they honour him by laying open his every weakness!

If the Cardinal de Rohan has any biographers, or *sincere friends*, the narrative will be very different. He is in the Bastille for forging the Queen's signature to obtain a collar of diamonds: it is supposed for a present to some woman, for his eminence is very gallant. He is out of luck; he might not have been sent to Newgate here for using the Queen's name to get diamonds.

Lady Waldegrave, I flatter myself, is very well, madam: she is at Navestock.

LETTER CCLXXXI.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 19, 1785.

I AM glad your lord is returned so soon, madam, and has dispatched so many prospects, and recovered of a law-suit, with which I did not know he was afflicted. His expedition and success would qualify him for an ambassador, if to be qualified for an office were a recommendation. I have oft been puzzled to guess why so many fools are sent about Europe on that employment, which seems to demand the utmost sagacity, shrewdness, and industry. At last I conceived this solution of my wonder: the incapacities selected are

doubtless chosen for the resemblance they bear to the characters of the august personages they are to represent—an observation that escaped the great Wicqfort himself. But perhaps he adapted his precepts to the wise remark of a Spanish grandee to one of the Phillips: "Your Majesty's self is but a ceremony." Consequently the copy ought not to be of more value than the original.

The newspapers told us of Mr. Murray's elopement. Pray is not it too juvenile a prank at his time of life? And how came the nymph to overlook that circumstance? A Scot, too, to commit a disinterested imprudence,—strange!

The Duchess of Portland was a simple woman, but perfectly sober, and intoxicated only by *empty* vases. Other duchesses, it seems, can grow tipsy with lemonade. *The* vase, the two thousand pounder, is, I hear, to be sold again: but who is to buy it? Lady Frances Douglas tells me, from the present Duchess of Portland, that there are great uncertainties about the will, and that they find it difficult to distinguish what is to be sold, and what not—so probably the lawyers may get more than the auctioneer.

The Bristol lunatic's is a more moving story even than the Heliconian milkwoman's. Miss Hannah More, who is humanity itself, has laboured in the service of both; but the former's case is desperate.

I am much flattered, madam, by Lady Ravensworth's reading a book on my recommendation, and more by her liking it. I have read it three times, and admired

the sensible parts more the last time than the first. If the author can arrive at judgment enough to winnow his grain from the chaff, I think he will make a great figure. He might be bold, without being extravagant. What I most dislike in so eccentric and daring a writer, is his patience in translating a whole "Spectator" into his gibberish. Patience is, of all others, the virtue that seems the least congenial to genius; perseverance is nearer allied to madness than to originality.

As this is a letter of scraps and replies, I will add an answer that I forgot to make to a former question of your ladyship. Pamela is a child, which Madame de Genlis gives out is an English girl, and which she is said to foster with more attention than her own children, or than the princesses of Orleans, to whom she is gover*nor*, for so she is styled. Sceptics pretend that Pamela is both her own child and a spurious Orleannoise. For fondness, I did not perceive the least; the resemblance is less obscure.

The Irish propositions seem to me to be brooding a storm. Methinks we have a strange propensity to gaming for our own dominions! France, like an old blacklegs, sits by, till the parties are heated, and she can strip the winner. I believe I shall live till we have not a whole island left to our back.

Friday night.

I wrote my last letter after dinner, before I went to the Duchess of Montrose. The moment after I arrived, Mr. Cambridge, who, rather than not be the first to trumpet a piece of news, would tell anybody the most

disagreeable news, sent a card to acquaint the duke and duchess that, after a long debate, Mr. Orde had withdrawn his Irish bill. This occasioned a consternation, and then a dead silence. I don't believe the officious intelligencer will be thanked; however, I trust this defeat will have saved us from another civil war!

LETTER CCLXXXII.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 17, 1785.

I DID conclude, madam, that the shooting campaign being opened, you would be pitching your tents in Northamptonshire. Joseph II., who is as keen a sportsman as Lord Ossory is going to shoot in Holland; Lord Rodney, who is just arrived from Spa, brings, that forty thousand men are on their march. Others add, that this imperial murderer is in danger from a swelling in his side—I hope he will die soon! His death would save two hundred thousand lives to Europe at least.

A thousand thanks to your ladyship for the communication of Lady Ravensworth's letter, which I return. She has expressed in two words the idea that I have tried to give you in many, of Lady Euston's disposition: *calm sweetness and good sense* describe her exactly. I hope they will always make her worthy of Lady Ravensworth's goodness and Lord Euston's partiality. Mr. Fitzpatrick's for me is not so justly founded; yet I am flattered by it, as perhaps one always is, when rated too highly, at least that is the

common opinion; though I confess I imagine that I am humbled in my own eyes, when I feel conscious of not deserving what is said of me.

Will not humility look affected, madam, when in the same breath I ask how I may send you a new book printed here, which might blow up some fumes of vanity in a head that had not been so severely disciplined by the owner as mine. It is the translation of my essay on modern Gardens by the Duc de Nivernois. I believe I mentioned it to your ladyship. You will find it a most beautiful piece of French, of the genuine French spoken by the Duc dc la Rochfoucault and Madame de Sevigné, and not the metaphysical galimatias of La Harpe and Thomas, &c. which Madame du Deffand protested she did not understand. The versions of Milton and Pope are wonderfully exact and poetic and elegant, and the fidelity of the whole translation, extraordinary. Some passages, not quite tender to his country, I was surprised that he did not cashier.

Of the Cardinal de Rohan I know nothing new, but that he absolutely now denies the charge. Indeed I am not at all *au fait* of the story; but I hear that Gray, the celebrated cutler, happening to be lately at Paris, was near being sent to the Bastille, as they suspected he was concerned in transmitting some of the stolen jewels, which are in England. Some say the whole was a plot of the Queen and Mons. de Breteuil her creature—but how or why, I am ignorant.

Have you heard the history of our Madame de Maintenon? *There* I am of the best authority: I know

many particulars from her own mouth. In short, *La Veuve* Delany, not Scarron, sent her woman to Windsor to get by heart the ichnography of the hotel granted to her. When she had made herself mistress of details, she went to dine at the White Hart. She was recalled by a page to Miss Goldsworthy, who told her it was his Majesty's command that she should bring down nothing but her lady's clothes and the boxes of her maids, for Louis le Grand is very considerate; she must bring no plate, china, linen, wine, &c.; all would be ready; and, when exhausted, she must not acquaint Mrs. Delany, but the aforesaid page. Louis himself pointed out where Mdlle. Daubigny, the great niece, should sleep, "and that room her nephew may use." When the new favourite arrived, Louis himself was at the door to hand her out of the chaise; there ends my journal. Others say that after a short visit, *elle le renvoyoit triste, mais point désespéré*, Lady Harcourt will be as jealous as the Montespan was.

My own history and gazette will both be very brief. Dr. Burney and his daughter, Evelina Cecilia, have passed a day and a-half with me. He is lively and agreeable; she, half-and-half sense and modesty, which possess her so entirely, that not a cranny is left for affectation or pretension. Oh! Mrs. Montagu; you are not above half as accomplished.

Next, I have been two days in town to meet Mr. Conway and Lady Ailesbury. We went to see the prince's new palace in Pall Mall; and were charmed. It will be the most perfect in Europe. There is an

august simplicity that astonished me. You cannot call it magnificent; it is the taste and propriety that strike. Every ornament is at a proper distance, and not one too large, but all delicate and new, with more freedom and variety than Greek ornaments; and, though probably borrowed from the Hôtel de Condé and other new palaces, not one that is not rather classic than French. As Gobert, who was a cook, and who was going to play the devil at Chatsworth and painted the old pilasters of the court there pea green, designed the decorations, I expected a more tawdry assemblage of fantastic vagaries than in Mrs. Cornelys's masquerade rooms. I beg his pardon—the Black Prince would not have blushed to banquet his royal prisoner in so modest a dwelling. There are three most spacious apartments, all looking on the lovely garden, a terreno, the state apartment, and an attic. The portico, vestibule, hall, and staircase, will be superb, and, to my taste, full of perspectives; the jewel of all is a small music-room, that opens into a green recess and winding walk of the garden. In all the fairy tales you have been, you never was in so pretty a scene, madam: I forgot to tell you how admirably all the carving, stucco, and ornaments, are executed; but whence the money is to come I conceive not—all the tin mines in Cornwall would not pay a quarter. How sick one shall be after this chaste palace, of Mr. Adam's gingerbread and sippets of embroidery!

You have heard of all the late deaths and self-murders to be sure, madam. I am very sorry for my

cousin, Edward Conway, who was a most amiable young man, but his case has long been thought desperate. His sister, Lady Bel, is going to be married to a Mr. Hatton, in Ireland.

I shall divert you more by my conclusion than by this long letter, though it may serve, as you are in the woods, and I am alone in a dark wet evening, and therefore will make no excuses. Well! but my conclusion; oh! Sir Harry Englefield told me of a new parody of the Christcross row, of which he could remember but the first line, and I have forgotten the author; but that first line is worth a whole poem. You recollect, madam, don't you? that

"A was an archer, and he shot a frog."

what think you of—

A was an archer—and painted her face!

What a crop of new wits and new poets we have in our caducity? Old people, they say, admire nothing but what was flourishing in their youth; I am sure, in my youth, there was nothing like the present constellation. Once in a year or two, Pope, after many throes was delivered of an imitation of Horace, and Swift now and then sold you a bargain in short verses; for the rest of our time we lived upon Thompson's and Mallet's blank tragedies, and Lord Lyttelton squirted out ballads to Delia no better than what are sung at Vauxhall. I hope this revival of wit is not lightning before death; nay, I do not recollect that other tottering empires threw out the brightest sparks at their extinction—*Speriamo!*

LETTER CCLXXXIII.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 27, 1785.

You are very gracious, madam, in calling yourself in debt, when I was in yours too; but I have had the best or the worst reason in the world for not writing—the having nothing to say. I know nothing, do nothing, but write explanations of my house not being visible after the month of October. I have had an intercourse of letters with Sir Ralph Payne about some Poles who would have ridden into my hall, sabre in hand, as if it was the Diet of Grodno, and they a people still; but I suppose they considered that we are not!

Though these invasions, which keep me in hot water for five months, rankle in my mind, I would not torment your ladyship with them if I had not occasion to beg your mediation. As this month of October is the only comfortable one I have (and I cannot reckon on many more), I am determined to keep it to myself, and have printed rules; nay, on the 1st, I unfurnish it as much as I can for an excuse for not shewing it. To my sorrow, Lady Lansdowne wrote to me after that day for a ticket for some of her acquaintance. Had it been for herself, I should have begged the honour of shewing it to her myself, a dispensation I reserve in my own breast for those I respect, as I most certainly do Lady Lansdowne. Unluckily I had but two days before refused a ticket to Marchioness Grey for herself,

and did not offer to be my own housekeeper, as I owe no particular attentions to the House of Yorke. However, I could not personally affront a lady, as I should have done if I had obeyed Lady Lansdowne, and therefore trusted her ladyship would excuse me, which I beg, madam, you will repeat to her, and tell her my case and concern.

Now, madam, do you wonder I do not *write?* Instead of lamentations on Kirby, I can think of nothing but the groans of Strawberry: in verity, instead of *writing*, could time be recalled, I never would be an author. I am sick of my own trumpery, and if humility were not the mask of vanity, I would tell you why —but they would be all vain or selfish reasons—and so no matter what they are.

I condole with your ladyship and Lady Ravensworth on the loss of the good General, and I am glad Lord Ossory tripped up the blacklegs.

I have had, and still have, a sad scene before my eyes; my poor honest servant, David, is dying of a dropsy, has been tapped twice, suffers dreadfully, wishes it over, and does not care for the trouble of another operation—so if Queens or Dukes of Wirtemberg come to see my house, nobody will send them away! What a wonderful contrast between poor David and Dubois, a valet de chambre of Louis treize, who has given an account of that monarch's death, which has just been lent to me! After receiving the Sacrament *avec de grosses larmes*, the slave adds, and "*des élévations d'esprit, qui faisoient connoître évidemment un com-*

merce d'amour entre leurs Majestés Divines et humaines." I suppose the poor reptile expected that Louis would in heaven take place of the first prince of the blood! When human folly, or rather French folly, can go so far, it would be trifling to instance a much fainter silliness; but do you know, madam, that the fashion now is, not to have portraits but of an *eye?* They say, "Lord! don't you know it?" A Frenchman is come over to paint eyes here!

I am not so partial as not to like the retort of Charles V. I would not advise Mr. Mason to go to Court, if Charles were living; nor will I go to Vienna. When General Johnstone returned a fortnight ago, I told him I hoped he had left everybody well in Germany but the Emperor. The postman stays—not that I can pretend to have a word more to say.

LETTER CCLXXXIV.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 16, 1785.

By coming hither an hour ago, I am so fortunate as to be able to thank your ladyship instantly for your most kind letter on Lady Euston's delivery. I am still more pleased with the very proper manner in which it was notified to you. Lady Horatio, who is with her sister, tells Miss Keppel that Lord Euston is delighted with his daughter; it was for a daughter he wished; there certainly is no danger of the line of Fitzroy failing for want of an heir male.

I am in debt, madam, for another letter which I received at Park Place, where I have been for some days; but Park Place furnished me with no more events than Strawberry Hill; and I must own that when I can tell nothing that will amuse, which seldom happens to me now, living as I do out of the world, and having outlived so many of my friends and acquaintance, I am shy of writing; for why should one write when one has little or nothing to say? I cannot *compose* letters like Pliny and Pope.

Your ladyship's query I can answer by heart. Richard Duke of York, who was supposed murdered in the Tower, was, though an infant, married solemnly by his father, Edward IV., to Anne-Mowbray, Duchess of Norfolk, and the heiress of that house, and still more a baby than himself. She died very soon; probably though I could never find exactly when, before the King, for it was in right of having married, or having been son of, her aunt (I forget which), that John Howard was created Duke of Norfolk by Richard III., and was the Jocky of Norfolk slain at Bosworth. You now see, madam, why I know so much of the matter off-hand.

I am come to town for two or three days on a little private business of my own, and to quit a horrid scene. My poor honest Swiss, David, has been dying of a dropsy for seven or eight months, and has suffered dreadfully. I have seen him but once since my return, as he has been speechless, and I flatter myself senseless, since last Saturday; but he groans shockingly;

and though I trusted to hearing he was gone this morning, he was still alive, but motionless. I shall not go back to Strawberry till he is buried. As your ladyship says Lady Ravensworth is in town, I shall endeavour to pay my duty to her. I am much pleased with the good old general's legacy; and don't wonder your ladyship is so, though it will scarce purchase half an acre of a modern hat.

As the ashes of the Cecils are rekindling, perhaps a Phœnix may arise! I remember Lord Hervey saying that everything degenerated and dwindled, and instancing in the last Lord Salisbury, who he said was the cucumber of Burleigh. Well then, as matters, when they can go no lower, may mount again, who knows what may happen, madam? Some melon-seeds, that have been neglected and not cultivated in the hot-house of a great family, may fall on good ground, and bring forth brave melons. Thus my father sprung from a granddaughter of Lord Burleigh, and then dwindled to the Gerkin—H. W.

LETTER CCLXXXV.

Berkeley Square, Friday, 18th.

As I could mean *only* respect, madam, on your ladyship's telling me Lady Ravensworth was in town, I am glad you have prevented my troubling her with a visit, which I should have made this evening, and which, as I return to Strawberry to-morrow, will be as well made by the intention. My breeding *de vieille*

cour makes me attend to certain ceremonials; but the slightest dispensation quiets the etiquette of my conscience, especially if it can give any kind of disturbance to anybody.

A marriage is agreed on between Mr. Pratt and Miss Molesworth; but, as there is still a moment between the cup and *her* lip, it may not be recorded in fate's parish-register.

My poor servant died in a few hours after I left him. Mr. Morrice, I hear, is dead, too, which must be as great a deliverance.

LETTER CCLXXXVI.

Berkeley Square, Friday night, Jan. 27, 1786.

As the first part entertained your lady-and-lordships, it is but a sort of duty to send you the second. I received a little Italian note from Mrs. Cosway, this morning, to tell me that, as I had last week met at her house an old acquaintance, without knowing her, I might meet her again this evening, *en connoissance de cause*, as Mlle. la Chevaliere Deon, who, as Mrs. Cosway told me, had taken it ill that I had not reconnoitred her, and said she must be strangely altered—the devil is in it, if she is not!—but, alack! I have found her altered again; adieu to the abbatial dignity that I had fancied I discovered; I now found her loud, noisy, and vulgar; in truth, I believe she had dined a little *en dragon*. The night was hot, she had no muff or gloves, and her hands and arms seem not to

have participated of the change of sexes, but are fitter to carry a chair than a fan. I am comforted, too, about her accent. I asked Monsieur Barthelemy, the French secretary, who was present, whether it was Parisian and good French: he assured me so far from it, that the first time he met her, he had been surprised at its being so bad, and that her accent is strong Burgundian. You ask me, madam, why she is here? She says, *pour ses petites affaires;* I take for granted, for the same reason that Francis was here two years before he was known.

Nor was this all my entertainment this evening. As Mademoiselle Common of Two's reserve is a little subsided, there were other persons present, as three foreign Ministers besides Barthelemy, Lord Carmarthen, Count Oghinski, Wilkes and his daughter, and the chief of the Moravians. I could not help thinking how posterity would wish to have been in my situation, at once with three such historic personages as Deon, Wilkes, and Oghinski, who had so great a share in the revolution of Poland, and was king of it for four-and-twenty hours. He is a noble figure, very like the Duke of Northumberland in the face, but stouter and better proportioned.

I remember many years ago making the same kind of reflection. I was standing at my window after dinner, in summer, in Arlington-street, and saw *Patty Blount*, (after Pope's death,) with nothing remaining of her immortal charms but her *blue eyes*, trudging on foot with her petticoats pinned up, for it rained, to visit *blameless Bethel*, who was sick at the end of the street.

Early in the evening I had been, according to your ladyship's leave, to wait on Lady Ravensworth. Her cough is very frequent, but it seems entirely from her throat, and not in the least from her breast.

After treating your ladyship with some of the *dramatis personæ* of modern story, I beg leave to inclose * a Venus of the present hour in her "puris *non* naturalibus." The drawing was made by a young lady at Bath, and was given to me by my sister. It diverted me so much that I gave it to Kirgate, with leave to have it engraved for his own benefit, and I should think he would sell hundreds of them.

Miss Hannah More, I see, has advertised her "Bas-bleus," which I think you will like. I don't know what her "Florio" is. Mrs. Frail Piozzi's first volume of "Johnsoniana" is in the press, and will be published in February. There is published another kind of *Ana*, called "Silva," by a Dr. Heathcote, on which I advise your ladyship not to throw away five shillings as I did —yet I could not read half-a-crown's worth; it is a heap of dull common-place.

LETTER CCLXXXVII.

Friday night, Feb. 10, 1786.

As your ladyship announced your speedy arrival in town; and as I suppose few read the second edition of a book after reading the first, I forbore to

* Not inclosed in the MSS.—Ed.

send you a second edition of my gout; yet I have had a black-letter one. My healed finger opened again, and for this week my surgeon has been picking chalk-stones out of both hands as if he were shelling peas. The gout returned, too, into my right hand and elbow, and swelled both. In short, since Wednesday was s'ennight, I have been prisoner a second time, and when my durance will end, I do not guess.

When you do come, madam, you will not hear much of Mr. Eden or Mrs. Jordan, or of the "Heiress," which, by the way, I went through twice in one day, and liked better than any comedy I have seen since the "Provoked Husband;" I like the prologue, too, very much; the epilogue is unworthy of both. Oh! but the hubbub you are to hear, and to talk of, and except which, you are to hear and talk of nothing else, for they tell me the passengers in the streets, of all ranks, talk of it, is a subject to which I suppose your letters have already attuned you, and on which I alone, for certain reasons, will say nothing; but if you don't guess, madam, I will give you a clue: don't you remember that, after Louis Quatorze had married the Maintenon, and the Dauphin Mademoiselle Chouin, the Duchess of Burgundy said to her husband, "*Si je venois à mourir, feriez vous le troisième tome de votre famille?*"—You may swear that my mysterious silence is not dated from any privity or knowledge: I do not know a tittle from any good authority; and though a mass of circumstances are

cited and put together, they command no credit: whoever believes, must believe upon trust. The rest must be the work—or the explosion of time, though secrecy does not seem to be the measure most affected.

To divert the theme, how do you like, madam, the following story? A young Madame de Choiseul is inloved with by Monsieur de Coigny, and Prince Joseph of Monaco. She longed for a parrot that should be a miracle of eloquence: every other shop in Paris sells mackaws, parrots, cockatoos, &c. No wonder one at least of the rivals soon found a Mr. Pitt, and the bird was immediately declared the nymph's first minister: but as she had two passions as well as two lovers, she was also enamoured of General Jackoo at Astley's. The unsuccessful candidate offered Astley ingots for his monkey, but Astley demanding a *terre* for life, the paladin was forced to desist, but fortunately heard of another miracle of parts of the Monomotapan race, who was not in so exalted a sphere of life, being only a *marmiton* in a kitchen, where he had learnt to pluck fowls with inimitable dexterity. This dear animal was not invaluable, was bought, and presented to Madame de Choiseul, who immediately made him the *secretaire de ses commandemens*. Her caresses were distributed equally to the animals, and her thanks to the donors. The first time she went out, the two former were locked up in her bed-chamber: how the two latter were disposed of, history is silent. Ah! I dread to tell the sequel. When the lady returned, and flew

to her chamber, Jackoo the second received her with all the *empressement possible*—but where was Poll? —found at last under the bed, shivering and cowering —and without a feather, as stark as any Christian. Poll's presenter concluded that his rival had given the monkey with that very view, challenged him, they fought, and both were wounded; and an heroic adventure it was!

I have not paper or breath to add more, madam, but to thank you for inverting the story of Poll, and feathering my Venus. I hope I shall have occasion to send you no more letters; but that if I cannot wait on you, you will have charity enough to come and visit the chalk-pits in Berkeley Square.

LETTER CCLXXXVIII.

Strawberry Hill, July 5, 1786.

It is no wonder, madam, that I durst not recommence, who know that I ought to think of nothing but finishing. Your ladyship tells me of my *lively ideas*, and the newspapers flatter me that I am a *well-preserved veteran;* but my weak fingers, my tottering steps, and above all, my *internal* looking-glass, are more faithful monitors, and whisper certain truths to one ear, that the sycophant self-love at the other ear cannot obliterate. Indeed I had nothing to write; I know nothing, and the sameness of summers makes me afraid of repeating what I may have said twenty times. The great lines of my little life are indeed

(very contrary to my intentions and to all the colour of my progress) marked with red letters like the almanac, that is, tinged by princes and princesses. Princess Amelie breakfasted here last week, and I have dined again at Gunnersbury, where were the Prince of Wales and the Prince of Mecklenberg; and that dinner produced an event which composes my whole annal. They went to drink tea at the dairy. I did not choose to limp so far, and stayed behind with Lady Barramore, Lady Clermont, and Mrs. Howe. However, I was summoned and forced to go. It was to command me to write verses on Gunnersbury—"Lord! madam, said I, "I am superannuated." She insisted. "Well, madam, if I must, your royal highness shall have an ode on your next birthday." All would not save me, though I protested against the rigour of the injunction. As it happened, the following trifle came into my head in the coach as I returned home:—

I.

In deathless odes for ever green
Augustus' laurels blow;
Nor e'er was grateful duty seen
In warmer strains to flow.

II.

Oh! why is Flaccus not alive
Your fav'rite scene to sing?
To Gunnersbury's charms could give
His lyre immortal spring.

III.

As warm as his my zeal for you
Great Princess, could I shew it—
But though you have a *Horace* too—
Ah! madam, he 's no poet.

I sent it next morning to her breakfast, and received this gracious and genteel answer:—

"I wish I had a *name* that could answer your pretty verses. Your yawning yesterday opened your vein for pleasing me, and I return you my thanks, my good Mr. W., and remain sincerely your friend,

"AMELIE."

To explain this, your ladyship must know that the ancient laureate gaped in the evening at the commerce-table, which I can tell Miss Burney, is a great sin on any Palatine hill. The moment the princess came hither t'other morning and spied the shield with Medusa's head on the staircase, she said, "Oh! now I see where you learnt to yawn."

I am glad for *her* interest, but sorry for my own, that Evelina and Cecilia are to be transformed into a Madame de Motteville, as I shall certainly not live to read her "Memoirs," though I might another novel.

I readily believe that Lord Euston's little girl is a fine child, madam; I never saw her, but she has good claims: nor do I know where Lord Euston is absent. My nepotism is so very extended, that I cannot follow their sojournings through the maps of so many counties, nay, nor of countries.

This summer may be very fine, but it is not quite to my taste: the sun never appears till as late as the fashionable people in town; and then has not much more warmth. However, he has made me amends in hay: I asked why they were so long mowing one of my

meadows? they said it was so thick they could not cut it. I have really double the quantity of any other year: yet I doubt these riches will not idemnify me for the Portland sale!—however, here my collection closes: I will not buy sparks, since I have acquired such a *bulse* of jewels—adieu! madam, the *modern* post goes out so early, that I shall scarce save it.

LETTER CCLXXXIX.

Strawberry Hill, July 22, 1786.

In your last, madam, you sent me a list of topics, on which we are not to talk for fear of disagreeing. It would be exceedingly difficult for me to disagree with your ladyship on all of them, as of some I know no more than a babe unborn; nor of the rest more than the newspapers, which are not my rule of faith, tell me. Moreover, as I neither love disputation, nor have any zeal for making converts, I shall certainly tap no subject on which I might be likely not to be of your ladyship's sentiments. As far as I know what your political sentiments are, I should rather imagine that we do agree, for I am sure you are in the right, and I am not quite ready to think that I am in the wrong, as we neither of us ever think or act from partiality, prejudice, or motives of personal affection or resentment: and principles being less subject to be warped than our passions, it is probable that our opinions are perfectly consonant; and when that is the

case, it is still more useless to discuss topics on which we already know each other's mind. A neutral person perhaps would conclude that one of us at least must be very determined to think everything right on one side and wrong on the other, when, on a medley of questions of the most heterogeneous natures, we dare not touch one for fear of squabbling. But such a person would be strangely in the dark, from not knowing that I am always ready to change my opinions in conformity to yours; and that you are so persuaded of my deference to your sentiments, that out of generosity you will not start a thought that might at first sight create a doubt in me, and that at the next minute I might adopt as being yours, before I was clearly convinced of its being well founded: though I should indubitably find it so on knowing the grounds of your reasoning. At present I am so totally in the dark on all that is passing, and whatever does happen is of so little importance to one of my age, and who has no children who will be interested in the consequences, that to save myself the trouble of uneasy prospects, I determine to think with Pope that

"Whatever is, is right,"

and in that composure I am secure of not disagreeing with your ladyship.

I wish this district supplied me with any matter that would entertain you; but a village near the capital has only the news and the fish that have been hawked about in town. Poor Lord Grantham is dead,

I do believe, though the papers say so; but I heard two days ago that he could not outlive the night.

I hope our daily oracles lie, according to their laudable practice, about the Whiteboys; at least I flatter myself that our lord's domains are unmolested by them. I am surprised they are not quieted and all made peers.

I shall go to London next week to see Mrs. Damer who is expected from Paris. If the weather continues as cold as it has been these two last nights, I will settle for the winter.

LETTER CCXC.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 2, 1786.

You would have been very unjust, my dear lady, which you are not, if you had been *seriously* angry with me for joking with you on your politics; you said you would not name them lest we should disagree: I, on my side, with the same good and peaceable intention, and who, you really know, never do dispute about anything, replied jesting. Now it would have been hard if you had been offended at my listing under Democritus, when you yourself had pointed out to me to avoid Heraclitus. I had rather be ready, with Dr. Warton, to panegyricize everything; but when he himself is reduced to generals, and can find no particular theme for an encomium, it is fair for me to resort to one of the other three divisions; for politics must range under one of the four: one must admire,

lament, laugh at, or be indifferent about whatever happens. My time of life, and the multitude of events I have seen, dispose me to indifference; but to keep up good humour, when you were afraid of our being too grave, I preferred smiling—and there I hope the matter will rest. It is for this reason I reply so soon, and because you are going to wander, and I might not know where to overtake you.

I have heard that the Duke of Bedford has ordered Mr. Palmer to have all his palaces ready for him; which is considered as an expulsion of the Queen Dowager. If it is only to make room for another antique, old woman for old woman, I should think one's own grandmother might be preferable to one that, for many reasons, might be grandmother of half London; but, as about politics, I leave everybody to judge for himself, nor is it any business of mine whether young Hamlet *speaks daggers* to Gertrude or not.

The vase for which your ladyship is so good as to interest yourself, was not the famous Cat's *lofty vase*, nor one of any consequence, but a vase and dish of Florentine Fayence, that stood under the table in the round chamber; nor had I the least concern but for the company who were so grieved at the accident. With the troops that come, I am amazed I have not worse damage; however, I am sometimes diverted too. Last week a scientific lady was here, and exactly at the moment that I opened the cabinet of enamels, she turned to a gentleman who came with her, and entered

into a discussion of the ides and calends. Another gentlewoman was here two days ago, who has seen a good half century: she said, "Well I must live another *forty* years to have time to see all the curiosities of this house." These little incidents of character do not make me amends for being the master of a puppet-show, for though I generally keep behind the scenes, I am almost as much disturbed as if I constantly exhibited myself—and

E'en Sunday shines no Sabbath day to me!

P. S.—I am told that this has been a fine summer —and in one respect I allow it, for it has brought the winter so forward already, that my grate was in full blow on Monday night with a good fire!

LETTER CCXCI.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 30, 1786.

How the Israelites contrived to make bricks without straw, I cannot tell; though, to be sure, there are succedaneums for everything. Letters, I know, can be made of lies, as well as newspapers; and we have large manufactures at Richmond and Hampton Court wrought by old ladies themselves, as they used to make japan, by cutting prints to pieces and daubing them over with colours and varnish; and they are so generous that they give their wares to any body that will retail them. But though I am hard driven to keep up a correspondence in these halcyon days when there

are no more events than in Paradise, not even a new peer made, I neither care to coin nor clip: by the way, I wonder what people will do in the next world for want of newspapers, where everything will be settled to all eternity, and where we know there is to be no marrying or giving in marriage, and then of course there will be no lyings in, no Gretna Greens, &c., &c. Pray, madam, do you think there will be any change of fashions? Do angels always wear the same patterns for their clothes? Oh! I find I could make a letter long enough if I were to indulge all the questions that rush into my head; but I will return to earth and grovel, as I generally do, within the bounds of my own parish. I have, indeed, been for a few days at Park Place, and seen the delight of my eyes, the new bridge at Henley—

"A Senator of Rome, while Rome survived,"

would have allowed it worthy of the Tiber: and it traverses a river a thousand times more beautiful; and some Verres, I suppose some time or other, will strip it of Mrs. Damer's colossal masks, and transport them to the capital of Europe, or America, or wherever that is to be. The emperor, to be sure, intends it shall be Vienna, now the King of Prussia is dead. As I hate both those heroes, and all such captains of banditti, I shall *go up* to Berlin with no address of condolence—not that I disdain knighthood on a good occasion, and have offered to accept it, if my *addresses* are accepted. You must know, Lady Charleville has taken a house between my niece, Mrs. Keppel, and the Duchess of

Montrose. That dowager has buried Captain Mayne, her second consort, whom she married in an arbour by moonlight, and whom she obliged to take her family name of Coghill that he might be her heir, as he was certainly fitter to be her son than her husband; and she remains possessed of 6000*l.* a-year but no *child. Therefore* I have commissioned my two friends above mentioned to propose *me*, and to offer that I will condescend to be Sir Horatio Coghill; and if she will waive the arbour scene, she being still more gouty than I am, I engage that like old Jack Harris and his first wife, I will ring the bell and order the groom of the chamber to wheel us to one another, when we have a need to kiss. You shall know, madam, if the treaty succeeds, and may depend on having a favour.

I admire the duchess dowager for holding out Woburn to the last moment. We shall now see which of the venerable matrons triumphs. I hope Duchess Nancy will call in Mr. Hastings—he would turn the old begum into the highway in her pattens, and boast of it when he had done.

I conclude your campaign in Farming-Woods is now opening, madam. Mr. Hatton, I hear, intends to refit Kirby, and inhabit it, and as he has the true patina of the Finches,—

"Will breathe a browner horror on the woods."

I like the restoration of those ancient palaces, and I suppose it will now be accessible as this age has invented good roads, which our worthy ancestors, did not think at all a necessary ingredient in living com-

fortably. We are so effeminate that we hate being jolted to death, or dug out of a hollow way—but every thing degenerates!

Mr. Fox, I am told, is at Cheltenham entirely occupied with taming a young rabbit. This is Mr. Hare's account; but he is partial,—for my part I suspect that he is teaching it to exercise that terrible weapon a dessert-knife. But whether he is or not, I think there ought to be an act of parliament against eating any thing but spoon-meat.

Lady Charleville has just sent me a flat refusal; so that if I have a mind to have children of my own to inherit Strawberry, I must look for—

Arbutei fœtus alibi—

This is a little disappointment; but when one has threescore nephews and nieces, one cannot want heirs. Nay, I still want a month of sixty-nine—*nous verrons.*

LETTER CCXCII.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 28, 1786.

As I conclude, madam, that by this time you are, at least, as real an inhabitant of the woods as Peter the wild boy, or that guileless savage the Marquis of Lansdowne, who would make one believe, like Biddy Tipkin in the "Tender Husband," *that he lives on hips and haws, and is mighty fond of pignuts.* I direct to Farming-Woods rather than to the honor of Ampthill. I should have answered your last sooner,

but had nothing to tell you; and at present all my gleanings would not load a parish girl's little paw. Except the sad deaths of two happy young women Lady Graham and Lady Harriet Elliot, I know no event but the death of Mr. Charles Hamilton, one of my patriarchs of modern gardening, who has been killed by Anstey, author of the "Bath Guide." Mr. Hamilton, who had built a house in the Crescent, was also at eighty-three eager in planting a new garden, and wanted some acres, which Anstey, his neighbour, not so ancient, destined to the same use. Hamilton wrote a warm letter on their being refused; and Anstey, who does not hate a squabble in print, as he has more than once shewn, discharged shaft upon shaft against the poor veteran, and

> "The grey goose quill that was thereon
> In his heart's blood was wet;"

for he died of the volley, as even a goose quill will do the feat at eighty-three, and surely, since the *first* edition of the "Bath Guide," never was a duller goose than Anstey! This is a literary anecdote, not much known, I believe, in the coffee-houses on Parnassus.

I was last week of a small party at Lady Clifford's at Richmond, and half of the company consisted of pinchbeck royalties, for there were the grandmother Princess Dowager Mrs. Molyneux, her son-in-law, Mr. Smyth, father of Ines de Castro, his sister, Lady Langdale, and I. Lady Mary Coke, who envies us for having mixed our alloy with the standard, when her

own counterfeit is but a Birmingham shilling that never had the impress and titles on it, would swear that we met to hatch a new Gunpowder Plot. It is incredible how she has toiled tooth and nail to couple Ines with Margery Nicholson. For my part, the rencontre put me in mind of Lady Dorchester, who meeting the Duchess of Portsmouth and Lady Orkney in the drawing-room at Windsor in the beginning of George I. cried out, "Heavens! who would have thought that we three royal w——s should meet here!"

Oct. 1st.

I began my letter three days ago, and it was barren enough, so I postponed it on a prospect of imperial recruits. I had notice that the archduke and archduchess desired a ticket to see

My gothic Vatican of Greece and Rome,

and that I would name the day. I replied, I could not presume to send a ticket, or name a day, but that their royal highnesses might command me and my nutshell whenever they pleased, if they would be so good as to excuse such a reception as a decrepit old man could give them. Accordingly I made no preparation but of coffee, tea, and chocolate; and as I am a courtier of the old rock, *only two cups* were set for their arch-highnesses in the round chamber, and none for their suite. In two days I could not make an entertainment, nor do I pique myself on vulgar ostentation, nor could light up the garden with coloured lamps by daylight, and when the leaves are falling and my orange trees gone into winter quarters. It

was intimated that I might expect them to-day. The morning was of the best October gold, and the sun himself came to do the honours of my house; however, I began to fear they would serve him as they did at Hampton Court, and not arrive till six o'clock; but at near two, as I sat watching for Heydues and Pandours to come powdering down my avenue, I saw a gang of foot passengers in boots and riding dresses strolling from Twickenham, holiday folks as I thought, —but at last one of the troop ran before, who, I perceived, was the Venetian resident. I hurried down to the gate, and the resident named the archduke and madame—and Prince and Princess Albani, &c., in short, they were eleven. Well! they have been here above an hour, were exceedingly civil, totally unceremonious, commended everything, were really charmed with the situation and views, especially the archduke; and Prince Albani, who does know, marked the right pictures, and they all fell pell-mell on the biscuits and bread and butter, but tasted nothing liquid. The archduke is rather a little man, and if Mr. Hare were to ask, as he did Garrick, whether he looked much like an *eagle*, I could not say yes. The archduchess is not a beauty, but better than I had heard, seems sensible, and is very conversant in our history. I had rummaged that old garret, my memory, for recollections of the month I passed at the Fair of Reggio, with the archduchess's grandsire and grandam, the Duke and Duchess of Modena, in the year of our Lord 1741. I had recalled the serene duke's figure, with a

mound of vermilion on the left side of his forehead to symmetrise with a wen on the right, and his sister, the Princess Benedict, who was painted and peeled like an old summer-house, with bristles on her chin sprouting through a coat of plaister,—but I did not intend to draw these portraits; and, above all things, put a gag on my tongue, lest it should blurt out the dreadful compliment I blundered on to the Duchess of Modena on her own mother's jealousy of her. But I had no occasion for my caution; there was such a babel of Italian dialects, and the archduke has such a very sharp *faussette*, that my meek voice could not be distinguished. Well! it is happily over; they expressed satisfaction, and, at least, were better pleased than with their *no* reception at Blenheim by the Prince of Mindleheim.

This detail, which I might have given in fewer words, and was not worth giving at all, may fill up a chink in an evening after a whole morning's shooting.

P.S.—The Austrian ovation came to me from Pope's, whence they had sent their coaches to the inn.

LETTER CCXCIII.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 13, 1786.

FAR be it from me, madam, to think that you ought to answer my letters incontinently. They very seldom contain anything that requires or deserves a reply. Your own last lay long before I wrote again.

In fact, this only comes to ask if you did receive one that I sent on Monday was se'nnight, directed to Farming-Woods, where the time of year made me conclude you were. If it lies there till this time twelvemonth, it will not signify; but I would not have your ladyship think that I have been still more remiss than I really have been. Though indolence would be very excusable at my age, want of matter is oftener the cause of my silence. Therefore when I have spun three pages out of nothing, I like to have the merit of the deed; and as you will give me credit for the assertion, your gamekeeper is welcome to light his pipe with my epistle.

LETTER CCXCIV.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 4, 1786.

When I, in the heart of these populous villages, can glean so little worth repeating, I do not wonder, madam, that Farming-Woods are still less productive —and without events and news, or business, what idle, affected, and unnatural things, are letters! I sent a postscript after mine, because I thought, as did happen, that the direction was wrong. Now I can only reply to a few paragraphs, and return thanks for the charades; but easy or difficult, I have solved neither: people without teeth can no more eat an apple than crack a nut. I did guess at the more mysterious one, and thought it might be a *spelling-book*, but that solution is so awkward, that I think the enigma would

not be worthy of Mr. Fitzpatrick. For Mrs. West's verses, I do not think I shall tap them. The milk-woman at Bristol, has made me sick of mendicant poetesses. If deep distresses and poverty cannot sow gratitude in the human heart, nor balance vanity and jealousy, these slip-shod Muses must sing better than they do, before I will lend an ear to them. Miss Hannah More is the best of our numerous Calliopes; and her heart is worth all Pindus. Misses Seward and Williams, and half-a-dozen more of those harmonious virgins, have no imagination, no novelty. Their thoughts and phrases are like their gown, old remnants cut and turned.

Mr. Selwyn had a bad fever in Gloucestershire, but is recovered and returned to Richmond. My good old friend, Sir Horace, whom your ladyship is so kind as to mention, was alive when the newspapers killed him. I scarce dare affirm that he is so now, as his excellent nephew, the younger Sir Horace, who posted to him on hearing of his danger, gives me small hopes of his lasting; but why should I hope it? He suffers, is eighty-five, and perfectly resigned to his fate!

It is being very fickle to go out of the fashion when the fashion adapts itself to me: yet except one day's lameness, and constant chalky rills from my fingers, I have had no gout this summer. If the Duchess of Devonshire has, and retains the diadem of fashion still (a long reign in so unstable a kingdom) I suppose the ladies of her court will recall their chins, and thrust

out a shoe wadded with flannel. Then it will be an easy transition to the *Béquille du Père Barnabas!* I recommend the tune to Colonel Fitzpatrick.

Lord and Lady Waldegrave have been with me two or three days, and to-day have sent me a confirmation of several of Princess Amelie's legacies as you have seen in the papers; but thus particularly:—

To Ladies Elizabeth and Caroline Waldegrave, each 4000*l. in money.* This she told me, on Lady Waldegrave's death, she intended, and so she did to this lord. To the two brothers of the Landgrave of Hesse 20,000*l.* a piece, and they are to be residuary legatees.

To Lady Anne Howard, 5000*l.* To Lady Barrymore, 3000*l.* To Lady Templetown, 2000*l.* stock. To Lady Anne Noel the interest of 5000*l.* for life. Small legacies to all her servants. To her executors, Lords Besborough and Pelham, 1000*l.* stock. The jewels to the Duchess of Brunswick.

Gunnersbury and her house in town to be sold.

Lord Besborough not being well enough, and Lord Pelham not in town, Lord Duncannon went to the king to know if he chose to be present at the reading of the will, which he declined; but has since sent Lord Sydney to one of the ladies of the bedchamber to ask if previous to her death she had expressed any wishes not inserted in her will, and to say he would fulfil whatever had been her desire. The princess is to be buried this day se'nnight at the king's expense, and the mourning to commence the next day.

The will seems to me a proper and a kind one; and surely neither her life nor death deserved the infamous abuse of the newspapers, which is as false as the exaggeration of her wealth. History, I believe, seldom contains much truth; but should our daily lying chronicles exist and be consulted, the annals of these days will deserve as little credit as the "Arabian Nights."

LETTER CCXCV.

Strawberry Hill, Dec. 1, 1786.

Oh! yes, madam, I am ready to continue playing at questions and commands, if you please, since you are content with such answers as I, simple man, can send you. I have no character to sustain, and don't care a straw how silly my letters are, if you find they fill up some of your idle moments. I am sure I have nothing better to do, and it was for your sake that I proposed *passing eldest.*

No, I am not at all struck with the letter of Beaumarchais, except with its insolence. Such a reproof might become Cato the Censor, in defence of such a tragedy as Addison's, on his descendant: but for such a *vaurien* as Beaumarchais, and for such a contemptible farce as "Figaro," it was paramount impertinence towards the duke, and gross ill-breeding towards the ladies. Besides, I abhor vanity in authors; it would offend in Milton or Montesquieu; in a Jack-pudding it is intolerable. I know no trait

of arrogance recorded of Molière—and to talk of the "Marriage of Figaro" as *instructive!* Punch might as well pretend to be moralizing when he sells a bargain. In general, the modern *Gens de Lettres* in France, as they call themselves, are complete puppies. They have beaten up their native pertness with the brutality of the ancient philosophers, and would erect themselves into a Tribunal of Dictators: they lay down laws impertinently, and employ affronts and insults as penalties. The *literati*, on the revival of learning, were less intolerable, for they only threw dirt, and called names in coarse Latin, which nobody but a Roman scavenger could have understood. The present fry are saucy, and quaint, and distorted, and void of all simplicity. What a forced affected phrase is *begueules mitigées!*

The history of Lactilla of Bristol is worse; she is a *begueule* not *mitigée*. Her ingratitude to Miss More has been superlative. The latter laboured unweariedly to collect subscriptions for her, and was at expense herself for the publication; and lest the husband, who is a dolt, should waste the sum collected, placed it out at interest for her as trustee, besides having washed and combed her trumpery verses, and taught them to dance in tune. The foolish woman's head, turned with this change of fortune and applause, and concluding that her talent, which was only wonderful from her sphere and state of ignorance, was marvellous genius, she grew enraged at Miss More for presuming to prune her wild shoots,

and, in her passion, accused her benevolent and beneficent friend of defrauding her of part of the collected charity. In short, she has abused Miss More grossly, has written a volume of scurrility against her, and is really to be pitied, as she is grown extravagant and ostentatious. Am I in the wrong, madam, for thinking that these parish Sapphos had better be bound 'prentices to mantua-makers, than be appointed chamber-maids to Mesdemoiselles the Muses?

I am sorry the knight of the brush has also now and then some human delinquencies—but alas! everybody has a heel or a finger not dipped in Styx—or rather, I think we should say, that has been dipped in Styx. I went t'other day, when I was in town, to see the Sacraments of Poussin that he has purchased from Rome for the Duke of Rutland. I remember when I saw them there, a thousand years ago, that I was not much enchanted; I rather like them better now than I expected, at least two or three of them—but they are really only coloured bas-reliefs, and old Romans don't make good Christians. There are two of Baptism; Sir Joshua said, what could he mean by painting two? I said, I concluded the second was Anabaptism. Sir Joshua himself has bought a profile of Oliver Cromwell, which he thinks the finest miniature by Cooper he ever saw. But all his own geese are swans, as the swans of others are geese. It is most clearly a copy, and not a very good one; the outline very hard, the hair and armour very flat and tame. He would not shew me his Russian Hercules. I fancy

he has discovered that he was too sanguine about the commission, as you say.

The town was ringing about your old neighbour of the north, Countess Strathmore, and the enormous barbarities of her husband, who beat her for six days and nights

Round Stainmore's wintry wild,

for which the myrmidons of the King's Bench have knocked his brains out—almost. This, and Lady Cathcart's long imprisonment, ought to make wealthy widows a little cautious of M'Philanders—but the Lord knows whether it will.

Lord Chewton is perfectly well. He was here lately with his parents. Soon after my neighbour, Sir Robert Goodere, made me a visit, and said he had been a little doubtful whether he might come, as he heard the Princess Elizabeth was come to Strawberry Hill for the air. Heavens! Sir Robert! what can you mean? Princess Elizabeth with me? you must dream, or imagine that Princess Elizabeth Lutterel is with me. At last I found out that he had seen Lord Waldegrave's servants in the queen's livery here, and the rest was the product of his own reasoning upon that phenomenon. Such is the birth of half the stories circulated—and had he communicated his conjecture to the village before I set him right, in three days that vision would have been in the newspapers.

I went yesterday to see the Duke of Queensberry's palace at Richmond, under the conduct of George Selwyn, the *concierge*. You cannot imagine how

noble it looks now all the Cornbury pictures from Amesbury are hung up there. The great hall, the great gallery, the eating-room, and the corridor, are covered with whole and half lengths of royal family, favourites, ministers, peers, and judges, of the reign of Charles I.—not one an original, I think, at least not one fine, yet altogether they look very respectable; and the house is so handsome, and the views so rich, and the day was so fine, that I could only have been more pleased if (for half an hour) I could have seen the real palace that once stood on that spot, and the persons represented walking about!—A visionary holiday in old age, though it has not the rapture of youth, is a sedate enjoyment that is more sensible because one attends to it and reflects upon it at the time; and as new tumults do not succeed, the taste remains long in one's memory's mouth.

P. S.—I was told t'other night that Lady Cathcart, who is still living, danced lately at Hertford, to shew her vigour at past four score—ware an Abbé de Gedoyn! She would risk another incarceration;—it is woful to have a colt's tooth when folks have no other left!

LETTER CCXCVI.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 12, 1786.

I PRETEND to neither judgment nor taste, madam, and I am sure I am in the wrong when I dislike what Lady Ravensworth, Lord Ossory, and Mr. Fitzpatrick, approve: and yet, instead of condemning contrary to my opinion, I rather doubt whether your ladyship does not commend more than you think the letter deserves, for your unalterable good humour makes you always set everything in the best light possible. *Modified brimstones*, I own, did sound to me too harsh an expression to be used of women of quality, in a country that piques itself on being the standard of good breeding; but one every day learns to correct one's original ideas, which are generally the fruits of ignorance. I imagined that the ladies scarce gave as a reason for asking for Beaumarchais's box, that they supposed his play was indecent—at least I know that that is not the object of *loges grillées*, nor could be for this plain reason, that the French stage does not allow of indecencies. *Des loges grillées*, I believe, are for the purpose of going undressed, and are used at all the chastest old plays: I know I have been in one at a tragedy with Mesdames de Luxembourg and Du Deffand; and therefore I was naturally enough led into the mistake of thinking that Beaumarchais had given himself an impertinent air on a very common occasion. If his farce was reckoned indelicate, it was

he that had offended the custom, not the ladies—*mais peut-être qu'on a changé tout cela;* and the austere Beaumarchais, like stern Lycurgus, may insist on ladies descending stark naked into the arena, and wrestling with Gladiators, to shew that genuine modesty does not wear a mask.

When I have said thus much, I know how much I am guided by prejudices: I have an aversion to the dictatorial pertness of the modern French authors, and cannot conceive that their very flimsy talents can entitle them to an importance that would mis-become Racine himself. In truth, except for such a predominant genius as Shakspeare or Milton, I hold authors cheap enough: what merit is there in pains, and study, and application, compared with the extempore abilities of such men as Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, or Mr. Pitt? What puerile matters are the orations of Cicero, composed, corrected, and re-written at fifty or sixty years of age, in comparison of what start and flow and overflow from our prodigies, the moment they are men? It is from being so proud of my countrymen that I betrayed so much contempt of the frogs of the French Hippocrene, and I hope I have a little disculpated myself for the disrespect I shewed to what your ladyship liked, and was so good as to send me.

I came to town the middle of last week, to quit the damps that made me much out of order, but the smoke of London soon recovered me. I dined with the Duchess of Bedford on Sunday, as she was to have no company but the two Misses Pelham, Miss Lloyd,

and Admiral Pigot; yet though three Misses sound very young, your ladyship is sensible it was not a very callow party. I shall be more juvenile to-night, for I am going to Mrs. Cowley's new play, which I suppose is as *instructive* as the "Marriage of Figaro," for I am told it approaches to those of Mrs. Behn in Spartan delicacy; but I shall see Miss Farren, who, in my poor opinion, is the first of all actresses.

Of news I have not heard a tittle since I arrived. To give them their due, the houses in London are of themselves as quiet, good sort of houses as any in the universe, and it is only when they are brimful that they produce so many strange scenes every day.

LETTER CCXCVII.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 15, 1786.

INSTEAD of being too prolix, I think you are very condescending, madam, to enter into my cavils and discuss them with me; but you are not so gracious when you suspect my *douceurs* of irony, which would reduce me to weigh my words, and then I should have no satisfaction in chatting with you. I set down the first thing that comes into my head, foolish or not; for instance, the moment I had written the last paragraph of my last, I knew it was silly, but I could not take the trouble of writing my letter again; and, in truth, I have a little partiality for nonsense. We are so much in the dark about most things, that when we

attempt to reason, we often fall into great absurdities; but giving the reins to nonsense, it is heads or tails whether we do not light upon sense.

Antigallican I was literally, when I found fault with Beaumarchais's epistle, but not politically so, God knows, nor in a fury. At past sixty-nine my tow and tinder are pretty well exhausted, and I should be ashamed to go out of the world in a fury about anything. About the commercial treaty it is impossible I should be in one, for it is most strictly true that I have not read a single article, and for this plain reason, that I should not understand a syllable of it. I understand trade no more than I do Coptic, and being much disposed to amuse myself for the little time I have left, I waste none of it on what I do not comprehend. Many years ago a person, who was never sorry to tell me my truths, said to me, "You understand several out of the way things, but you know nothing that is common or useful." This was true, then, and alas! is so to this hour, and will continue so for a few more; and, therefore, good or bad, the commercial treaty could have no share in my censure of the letter, nor will occasion a wrinkle on the surface of my thoughts. All I can say on the subject is, that the treaty being good, he must be a bad Whig that is angry at it, let who will have made it.

I know nothing of the milkwoman's new edition, and certainly shall not send for it. When people disappoint me and prove very worthless, I have done with them, and suppose they don't exist.

"The Greybeards" have certainly been chastised, for we did not find them at all gross. The piece is farcical and improbable, but has some good things, and is admirably acted. "Cœur de Lion" did not answer; nor was I much charmed with the music; but my ear is too bad to judge at first hearing. The scenes are excellent; Mrs. Jordan is quite out of her character, and makes nothing of the part; and the turning the ferocious Richard into a tender husband is intolerable. If an historic subject is good but wants alteration, why will not an author take the canvas, cut it to his mind, but give new names to the personages? It only makes a confusion in one's ideas, to maim a known story.

You guessed rightly, madam: I certainly should have been distracted to have risked my letters to Sir Horace being printed. Though I could not write very freely through the gutters of so many post-offices, I did not desire Europe should see what I thought of its sovereigns, who were chiefly our *dramatis personæ*. Sir Horace the nephew brought away my letters at different times; and as he was there at his dear uncle's death he will secure the rest, which are not a dozen.

For the new edition of Shakspeare, it did not at all captivate me. In the first place I did not subscribe for my heirs and executors as it would have been, when the term of completion is twelve years hence; but I am not favourable to sets of prints for authors. I scarce know above one well executed "Coypell's Don Quixote," but mercy on us! *Our* painters

to design for *Shakspeare!* His commentators have not been more inadequate. Pray, who is to give an idea of Falstaff now Quin is dead? And then Bartolozzi, who is only fit to engrave for the "Pastor fido," will be to give a pretty enamelled fan-mount of Macbeth! Salvator Rosa might, and Piranesi might dash out Duncan's Castle; but Lord help Alderman Boydell and the Royal Academy!

Lord Macartney I have seen twice; he is quite well; I was at Lady Macartney's last night: I told them of your ladyship's inquiries. They have got a charming house in Curzon Street, and cheap as old clothes. It was Lord Carteret's, and all antiqued and grotesqued by Adam, with an additional room in the court fourscore feet long, then dedicated to orgies and now to books.

Thus I have answered all your ladyship's questions *tant bien que mal;* and now after telling you a short story, will take my leave.

Lady Louvain wished to see Mademoiselle Deon and Mr. Dutens invited her. The lady asked her if she had ever been at Dijon, and said she herself had lain in there. I have been there, said Miss Hector, but did not lye in there, *car je suis vierge, et pour que les vierges accouchent, il faut qu'elles aillent à Jerusalem.* It was impertinent to Lady Louvain, and worse in a clergyman's house; but women of fashion should not go aboard Amazons.

LETTER CCXCVIII.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 22, 1786.

YOUR ladyship is so apt to refine, that give me leave to say, your penetration sometimes a little overshoots itself. You tell me that Lord Ossory says you *must* believe that I have not read the commercial treaty, which rather implies that you were not so disposed. Now I do not see what credit was to result to me from not having read it. Most people would think that I ought to have examined a matter of national importance; and few men perhaps would have owned so frankly, that my reason for not reading it was that I could not understand it. Yet so the whole fact was; and though I think it less despicable to affect ignorance than to pretend to know what one does not, there was not a grain of affectation or untruth in the case. I have lived too long not to despise art which is the filigraine of a little mind; and were I to grow cunning now, I should probably be under ground before my *finesse* could achieve any *tour* of legerdemain.

Had you been content with less shrewdness, madam, you would not have slid into another error; you saw that I had first written *family* for *academy*, as was very plain I had—and then you concluded that I had substituted the latter word out of prudence, for it seems that in your ladyship's eyes I am grown all on a sudden a miracle of circumspection. But had you

considered a moment you would have seen that it was impossible I could ever have meant to write *family*, and that my pen, by inattention, must have written *royal family*, from the greater familiarity of the phrase; for, I beseech you, are the *royal family* to design the prints for Shakspeare? With all my respect for nonsense, I never mean to write one word for another which would not be to be foolish but drunk; and I must have swallowed two bottles before I could lament that the royal family were incapable of giving a just drawing of Macbeth. I might as well have said that I did not read the treaty because Mrs. Siddons had negotiated it.

You will perhaps, madam, discover some close policy, when I tell you that I have not even seen the new volume of "Lord Clarendon's Papers;" yet it is what I must say, if I answer you with truth. Nay, I even never did look into the former volume. I was tired of those times before they appeared. I had read and written as much as I chose about my Lord Clarendon, and did not care to return to the subject. Mere personal amusement is all I seek now, and I would sooner return to Mother Goose's Tales than to the gravity of the former century. Gout, and pain, and confinement, have made me hate everything serious, and I try to paint all my thoughts *couleur de rose*, which is *my* philosophy.

I am not surprised that there should be a great party for the milkwoman. The wise people of Bristol have taken it into their heads that they have a manu-

facture of original genius *chez eux*, and the less foundation they have for their credulity, the stronger their faith is, as always is the case of fools. Great was the Diana of the Ephesians, though they made the image themselves. If Lactilla puts gin into her milk and kills herself, she will be immortal, and Mr. Hayley and Mr. Cumberland will write hymns to her—with all my heart.

Lady Anne's good sense and just observations are not only doubly hereditary, but the consequence of the very rational education you give her, madam. Truth is natural to youth, and I believe would produce a good portion of sense too, if they did not hear and see so much falsehood, as they find by degrees, in the commerce of the world; and which they receive with respect, because it comes from elder persons, who they conclude act rightly. People are afraid of trusting the indiscretion of their children and do not tell them, such a gentleman is a rascal, such an one a fool —nay, I can recollect having believed that several persons were sensible, because I heard others say they were so; and I had not then learnt to ask silently the leading question,—"How do *you* know whether they are sensible or not?" Lady Anne seems to do so already, and, therefore, will not easily be a dupe. Commonly we have not a stock of experience, till it is of little or no use. We want it most when we are coming *into* the world. Sages, who are proud of it when they do not want it, are sometimes so generous as to bequeath their hoard to posterity—and posterity value it no more than a mourning ring.

I have lost another old acquaintance, Lady Beaulieu. As there are not above half a dozen persons left now who were on the stage to my knowledge when I became a spectator, I should be weak indeed if I interested myself much in what happens on a theatre where the principal actors are twenty, thirty, or forty years younger than I am. My old remembrancer, the gout, who never lets me forget myself long, is come, since I wrote the former part of this last night, into my left hand, and I must suspend my manœuvres, I suppose, for some weeks, for he seldom makes his visits superficially, so I can only be a *visitée;* and the weather is so sharp that I am not sorry to remain in my own chimney corner.

LETTER CCXCIX.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 9, 1787.

THE post is come in so late (past three) and I am forced to dine so early, madam, that I could say but a few words, were I able; but I have been out, leaving my name, by way of airing, at doors of how d'yes, and it tired me so much, that I was forced to leave half upon my conscience and come home to rest till another day. However, I am recovered of my gout, have been abroad three evenings, and wish myself much joy of far the shortest fit I have had these twenty years (only for a fortnight), so that if I live another century, I may hope to have worn out the mines of chalk, and to be very healthy and robust too.

I must not only thank your ladyship for your most obliging inquiry, but for your great condescension in making most unnecessary apologies. It was indeed my head was hurt at a *soupçon* of untruth, not my heart, which can only be answerable to itself; but on the verge of seventy I should be liable to the imputation of dotage if I were grown either affected or artful—what! make the undertaker laugh at me!

I am charmed with your theatre, and only wish I could be a spectator. I extremely approve your good humour in dancing and acting, for I should hate gravity, dignity, or austerity in one's own house in the country. Who had not rather see Scipio playing at leap-frog with his children at his Ampthill, than parading to St. Paul's to sing "Te Deum?" Would to the Muses too, that I were capable of being your poet epilogate; not that I would if I could, when you have the best epilogue as well as prologue-maker in the whole county of Parnassus at your elbow. How the deuce, madam, should I fifty years ago have been able to write an epilogue worthy of waiting on a prologue of Mr. Fitzpatrick? I am foolhardy enough, when I send you a dab of prose, and yet I would not venture that, if it were not a curiosity, that is, almost a *true* novel; at least, I have not, as you will find, attempted to add one romantic circumstance, rather the contrary. The little French ditty, *said* to be written by an English earl, I am sure will please you for its tender simplicity.

I have printed but forty copies, and merely for presents, which I only mention from my ambition that

Lord Ossory may have a complete set of my editions; and, as I have appropriated all the rest, I shall not have another copy but my own left.

I must finish for every reason, *as per above*, and am, the most obedient servant of the whole *dramatis personæ*.

LETTER CCC.

Strawberry Hill, Jan. 21, 1787.

YOUR ladyship's letter followed me hither, and I give you many thanks for complying with my suit for the epilogue, which was very proper for the occasion, simple and unaffected. In fact, those overtures and adieus are very difficult, especially when the pieces are not new; nor can I in general approve them. If a prologue, like the contents prefixed to cantos of a poem, opens the plot, it anticipates it. If it does not, why is it there? An epilogue is essentially as useless: will people have liked a play, if they have not liked it? though the poet begs they will have done so, or thanks them though they have not? Dryden talked politics or controversy, or of anything passing in town, in *his* preface and postfaces. Addison and classic authors talked of Sophocles and Euripides—in their prologues and in their epilogues, as if the whole audience were to sup at the Rose Tavern. Garrick's essays were like medley overtures, drew characters of different classes, which diverted the pit and galleries, answered his purpose, shewed his mimicry, and will not do with-

out it. In short, prologues seem never to have been necessary but to Shakspeare, whose plays, often comprehending half a century and half Europe, it was impossible for the spectators to conceive at once, from the mere shifting of the decoration (or from not shifting it, as was a little the case in his time), that the actors were one moment in the street at Venice, and the next in a bedchamber in Cyprus. But I did not mean to write a dissertation, and shall leave the practice to the will of the world, to be continued or omitted as it pleases; which I believe is the wisest way in most things, when one's opinion does not sail with the current. I dip so little in that tide, that I did not know of Mr. Craufurd's new passion: I have seen him but once these six weeks.

Lord Waldegrave has taken, for six months, the ready furnished house in Dover Street, over against Lord Ashburnham's, which is very agreeable to me, as being so near me. I saw them on the eve of the birthday.

Lord Carmarthen's dinner answered the expectation of nobody; except Mr. Fox, General Conway, and Lord Macartney, I think there was nobody but foreign ministers. Though his list of invitations was as promiscuous as the company that Noah carried into the ark, the pairs were not quite so well sorted. The Marquis and Earl of Buckingham would not have been a very loving couple. In truth, I thought the whole congregation, had it met, would have been so distressed and awkward, that it would have been like a dinner

that the late Duke of Montagu made at Bath, of all the people he could find there that stuttered. The three that did go, were the fittest in the world for a heterogeneous mixture; Mr. Fox and Lord Macartney are easy with anybody; and Mr. Conway never knows with whom he is, nor perceives there is anything political or uncouth amongst any set of people. He had forgotten the dinner the next day, till I asked him about it.

Are not you sorry, madam, that the King of Prussia's bigamy is not true? It diverted me exceedingly; it would have been quite new to have three queens at once—one that is not his wife, one that is, and one that cannot be. I fear, too, that the Prince of Anhalt is not so complete a courtier as was reported; it was said that, in compliment to his sovereign, he had doubled his matrimony too. Kings should strike novel strokes: *they* can give a fillip to the world, and turn it out of its old humdrum ways. Nobody minds individuals; the Duchess of Kingston and Mr. Madan aimed in vain at introducing polygamy; but when Solomon countenanced it, the Queen of Sheba went to admire his wisdom; and I dare to say at her return had as many husbands as his Hebrew majesty had wives; she never went so far on mere speculation.

LETTER CCCI.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 1, 1787.

THOUGH you announced Lord Ossory, madam, I did not expect to see him so soon as the next day, when he was so good as to call on me. His appearance prevented my immediate reply, as he can now shoot news flying, and I only gather up a few scattered feathers; and at present have not picked up one *pen* feather, nor should write but to explain the ballad you wot of, and which I never saw in its own person, though I know its birth and parentage, ay, its father and mother.

It was written by the late Lord Melcombe, on a Mrs. Strawbridge, whom I knew, and who was still a very handsome black woman; she lived at the corner house going to Saville Row, over against the late Duke of Grafton's. The lord, then Mr. Doddington, fancied himself in love with her, and one day obtained an assignation. He found her lying on a couch. But, whether he had not expected so kind a reception, or was not so impatient to precipitate the conclusion of the romance, he kneeled down, and seizing her hand, cried, "Oh! that I had you but in a wood!"—"In a wood," cried the astonished Statira; "what would you do? rob me?" However, then, or afterwards, that interlude produced an arrangement, and he gave her a bond of ten thousand pounds to be paid if he married any body else. He did marry Mrs. Behan, with whom

he could not own his marriage till Mrs. Strawbridge died.

As I cannot precisely ascertain the date of the ballad, I am not sure that *Mrs. Masham* was the famous *Lady Masham*, though perhaps it was, as, by the mention of the kitcats, it was probably written in Queen Anne's time, when her Majesty's favour might have stamped that gentlewoman for a beauty. *The little Whig* was most certainly the beautiful Lady Sunderland, the Duke of Marlborough's daughter. There never was but one Duchess of Shrewsbury, the Italian, mentioned in Lady Mary Wortley's first pastoral; and there never was a Duke of Beaufort that made it worth knowing which duke it was. Who the witty Sir Harry was, it is impossible to guess now: it might be the wittiest Sir Harry then alive, or the foolishest—for the expression rather seems ironic.

The pamphlet I have read, madam; but cannot tell you what would have been my opinion of it, because my opinion was influenced before I saw it. A lady-politician ordered me to read it and to admire it, as the *chef d'œuvre* of truth, eloquence, wit, argument, and impartiality; and she assured me that the *reasonings* in it were unanswerable. I believe she meant the *assertions*, for I know she uses those words as synonymous. I promised to obey her, as I am sure that ladies understand politics better than I do, and I hold it as a rule of faith—

> "That all that they admire is sweet,
> And all is sense that they repeat."

How much ready wit they have! I can give you an instance, madam, that I heard last night. After the late execution of the *eighteen* malefactors, a female was hawking an account of them, but called them *nineteen*. A gentleman said to her, "Why do you say *nineteen?* there were but *eighteen* hanged." She replied, "Sir, I did not know *you* had been reprieved."

The letters of Henry VI.'s reign, &c., are come out, and *to me* make all other letters not worth reading. I have gone through above one volume, and cannot bear to be writing when I am so eager to be reading. There is one of *Sir John Falstaff*, in which he leaves his enemies to *White Beard* or *Black Beard*, that is, says he, to God or the Devil.

There are letters from all *my* acquaintance, Lord Rivers, Lord Hastings, the Earl of Warwick, whom I remember still better than Mrs. Strawbridge, though she died within these fifty years. What antiquary would be answering a letter from a living countess, when he may read one from Eleanor Mowbray, Duchess of Norfolk.

LETTER CCCII.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 9, 1787.

THOUGH I sigh for your ladyship's coming to town, I do not know whether I shall not be a loser, for what news don't you send me? That Lord Salisbury is a poet is nothing to your intelligence that *I* am going to

turn player; nay, perhaps I should, if I were not too young for the company!—You tell me, too, that I snub and sneer; I protest, I thought I was the snubee.

For "The Way to Keep Him" I did not imagine it would come to anything, and so it has proved. However, I was enjoined secrecy, and, though I knew it could not remain a secret, I did not choose to be the reporter: I should have been a very premature one, for the *dramatis personæ* were not filled by two or three; one of the principal actresses has already declined—and there is an end of it.

For sneering, Lord help me! I was as guiltless; every day I meet with red hot politicians in petticoats, and told your ladyship how I had been schooled by one of them, and how docile I was. If you yourself have any zeal for making converts, I should be very ready to be a proselyte, if I could get any thing by it. It is very creditable, honourable, and fashionable; but, alas! I am so insignificant that I fear nobody would buy me; and one should look sillily to put one's self up to sale and not find a purchaser. In short, I doubt I shall never make my fortune by turning courtier or comedian; and therefore I may as well adhere to my old principles, as I have always done, since you yourself, madam, would not be flattered in a convert that nobody would take off your hands. If you could bring over Mr. Sheridan, he would do something: he talked for five hours and a-half on Wednesday, and turned every body's head. One heard everybody in the streets raving on the wonders of that speech; for my part, I

cannot believe it was so supernatural as they say—do you believe it was, madam? I will go to my oracle, who told me of the marvels of the pamphlet, which assures us that Mr. Hastings is a prodigy of virtue and abilities; and, as you think so, too, how should such a fellow as Sheridan, who has no diamonds to bestow, fascinate all the world?—Yet witchcraft, no doubt, there has been, for when did simple eloquence ever convince a majority? Mr. Pitt and 174 other persons found Mr. Hastings guilty last night, and only sixty-eight remained thinking with *the pamphlet* and your ladyship, that he is as white as snow. Well, at least there is a new crime, sorcery, to charge on the opposition! and, till they are cleared of that charge, I will never say a word in their favour nor think on politics more, which I would not have mentioned but in answer to your ladyship's questions; and therefore I hope we shall drop the subject and meet soon in Grosvenor Place in a perfect neutrality of good humour.

LETTER CCCIII.

Strawberry Hill, June 14, 1787.

THOUGH your ladyship *gave me law* (a very proper synonyme for delay), I should have answered your letter incontinently, but I have had what is called a *blight* in one of my eyes, and for some days was forced to lie fallow, neither reading nor writing a line; which is a little uncomfortable when quite alone. I

do begin to creep about my house, but have not recovered my feet enough to compass the whole circuit of my garden. Monday last was pleasant, and Tuesday very warm, but we are relapsed into our east-windhood, which has reigned ever since I have been here for this *green winter*, which, I presume, is the highest title due to this season, which in southern climes is positive *summer*, a name imported by our travellers, with grapes, peaches, and tuberoses; but, as we cannot build hothouses for our whole latitude, our summers seldom come to maturity. However, most of my senses have enjoyed themselves—my sight with verdure, my smell by millions of honeysuckles, my hearing by nightingales, and my feeling with good fires; tolerable luxury for an old cavalier in the north of Europe! Semiramis of Russia is not of my taste, or she would not travel half round the arctic circle; unless she means to conquer the Turks, and transfer the seat of her empire to Constantinople, like its founder. The ghost of Irene will be mighty glad to see her there; though a little surprised that the grand duke, her son, is still alive. I hear she has carried her grandchildren with her as hostages; or she might be dethroned, and not hear of it for three months.

The Duke and Duchess of Buccleugh, they say, came through Holland, and going to visit a chief burgher, found cannon planted before his door—and did not stay to leave a card. How Lord George Gordon must long to be there and burn a street or two!

Most of Mr. Cunningham's anecdotes, to be sure, are

not new at present, madam, but they would have been so twenty years ago, and at least confirm much of what has come out recently. Some, I doubt, have been castrated; indeed, I have heard so, nay, am sure, for in one paragraph a siege or town is mentioned, and refers to the preceding paragraph, in which not a syllable of it is said; clumsy enough.

I am very far from tired, madam, of encomiums on the performance at Richmond House, but I, by no means, agree with the criticism on it that you quote, and which, I conclude, was written by some player, from envy. Who should act genteel comedy perfectly, but people of fashion that have sense? Actors and actresses can only guess at the tone of high life, and can*not* be inspired with it. Why are there so few genteel comedies, but because most comedies are written by men not of that sphere? Etheridge, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Cibber, wrote genteel comedy, because they lived in the best company, and Mrs. Oldfield played it so well, because she not only followed, but often set, the fashion. General Burgoyne has written the best modern comedy, for the same reason; and Miss Farren is as excellent as Mrs. Oldfield, because she has lived with the best style of men in England; whereas Mrs. Abington can never go beyond *Lady Teazle*, which is a second-rate character, and that rank of women are always aping women of fashion, without arriving at the style. Farquhar's plays talk the language of a marching regiment in country quarters; Wycherley, Dryden, Mrs. Centlivre,

&c., wrote as if they had only lived in the "Rose Tavern;" but then the Court lived in Drury-lane, too, and Lady Dorchester and Nel Gwyn were equally good company. The Richmond theatre, I imagine, will take root. I supped with the duke at Mrs. Damer's, the night before I left London, and they were talking of improvements on *the local*, as the French would say.

A propos, Mrs Damer has given me her eagle, which I call *the spoilt child* of my antique one, it is in such a passion. I hope your ladyship will approve of the motto I design for it. Do you remember the statue at Milan, with this legend:—

"Non me Praxiteles, sed Marcus finxit Agrati!"

Mine is to be this pentameter:—

Non me Praxiteles finxit, at Anna Damer.

I left Lady Waldegrave in town, not quite well, though I never saw her better than when she arrived, and her complaints, I believe, are merely the consequence of her situation. I asked her little girl whether she had a Waldegrave or a Walpole temper, but in more intelligible phrase to her, a gentle or a violent one? She replied, "A middling one."

Friday night 15th.

To-day has contradicted all I wrote last night. The Cadogans and Churchills have dined with me, and the south wind came to meet them, and we drank tea out of doors, and sat there till half an hour after eight, Strawberry never looking in greater beauty. Mr. Previs, the Jew, came with them, of whom Lord Ca-

dogan is as fond as the prince. Lord Hertford is to give his royal highness a ball on Monday, to which I am asked; but I have sent my excuse: dancing and the next reign are not in unison with seventy and limping. Lady Pembroke is to bring the Princess Lubomirski hither to-morrow to breakfast, which I cannot avoid; but I will not begin the chapter of grievances on the people that come to see my house. I should be as tiresome to your ladyship, as they are to me; yet you do deserve a little chastisement. What a string of lofty words have you applied to a poor old creature who never was entitled to one of them! Honour! value! admiration!—for what! of what!—mercy on me! I look into my heart, I look into my head, and find nothing in either that does not make me blush, and reject, thoroughly mortified, such unmerited compliments. Honour and value Mr. Howard, madam; admire Mr. Sheridan; but scatter no flowers on a skeleton who is hasting to the land of oblivion, and may be well content if his faults accompany him thither!

LETTER CCCIV.

Strawberry Hill, June 28, 1787.

I BEG your ladyship to forgive my asking you what will sound like an impertinent question: it is, whether you received an answer from me dated the 16th, to one I had the honour of receiving from you a day or two before? My reason for asking it is, that a letter I

wrote on business by the same post did actually miscarry, and has given me some trouble. We have no posthouse at Twickenham, but a boy from Isleworth fetches them, and I suppose sometimes twists them to the tail of a paper-kite. If he made that use of my last to your ladyship, perhaps you will have thought that as you gave me holidays, and told me I need not write soon, I have been flying a kite too; but my second childhood does not enable me to gambol; and if it did, you are one of the last persons from whom I would play truant.

I have been sending some layers of clove-carnations to Lady Ravensworth, for which Lady Euston wrote to me. I had not so many as I wished, the severe weather of last year having killed most of mine; and my gardener is so bad, that he does not restock me soon. I offered him an annuity some years ago, if he would leave me; but he desired to be excused, as it was not so good as his place, and he knew nobody else would take him; so I have been forced to keep him, because nobody else will.

As this is only a codicil to the letter I doubt you never received, madam, it shall not be longer.

LETTER CCCV.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 6, 1787.

I WILL not make a feigned excuse, madam, nor catch at the pretence you kindly offer me of a lost

letter; no, I confess honestly that I knew I owed you one, but was too conscientious to pay my just debts with the base currency of Richmond and Hampton Court, and I have no other specie. I know nothing, do nothing, but repeat the same insipid round that I have passed for so many summers, if summer this has been to be called. The dowagers of my Canton pick up and dress up tales of what is done in London and at various watering places; but I hold it a prudery becoming old men, (the reverse of that of old women,) not to trouble myself about or censure the frolics of the young; and for my contemporaries, so few of them are left, that unless by living to the age of Old Parr or Jenkins, we are not likely to commit anything remarkable. I have seen none of the French, Savoyard, or Lorraine princes and princesses, sterling or pinchbeck: I broke off my *commercial treaty* with France, when I was robbed of half Mad. du Deffand's papers, and care no more for their *bonne compagnie*, than for their convicts Monsieur de Calonne and Madame de la Motte.

Under such a negative existence, what could I write, madam? I have heard nothing for these two months worth telling you but this little story. There lives at Kingston a Mrs. Barnard, a very wealthy hen-Quaker. She has a passion for beautiful black and white cows, never parts with a pretty calf, and consequently has now a hecatomb as striped and spotted as leopards and tigers. The Queen happened to see this ermined drove, and being struck with the beauty of their robes, sent a page to desire to purchase one. Mrs. Barnard replied,

she never sold cows, but would lend her Majesty her bull with all her heart. *A propos* to Court, it is not a recent story I believe, but did you ever hear, madam, that Mrs. Herbert, the bedchamber-woman, going in a hackney-chair, the chairmen were excessively drunk, and after tossing and jolting her for some minutes, set the chair down; and the foreman, lifting up the top, said, "Madam, you are so drunk, that if you do not sit still, it will be impossible to carry you."

To prove how little I had to say, I will empty my bi-mensial memory with the only other scrap I have collected, and which I may send in part of payment for the four lines of *Latin* of Archbishop Tennison, which I have received from your ladyship. Mine is an ancient Latin saw, which proves that the famous Bulse was a legal escheat to the Crown. In the new Volume of the Archæologia is an essay on the state of the Jews in England in former times; and there it is said, "*Judæus verò nihil possidere potest, quia quicquid acquirit, acquirit regi.*" I suppose nobody will dispute Mr. Hastings being a Jew; or, if you please, for *Judæus* you may read *Indicus*, so like are the words and the essence.

Many thanks for the advertisement, which is curious indeed! I have not visited Mr. Herschel's giant telescope, though so near me. In truth, the scraps I have learnt of his discoveries have confounded me: my little head will not contain the stupendous idea of an infinity of worlds; not that I at all disbelieve them, or anything that is above my comprehension. Infinite space

may certainly contain whatever is put into it; and there is no reason for imagining that nothing has been put into it, but what our short-sighted eyes can see. Worlds, systems of suns and worlds may be as plenty as blackberries; but what can such an incredibly small point as a human skull do with the possibility of omnipotence's endless creation? Do but suppose that I was to unfold to a pismire in my garden an account of the vast empire of China—not that there is any degree of proportion in the comparison. Proceed; suppose another pismire could form a prodigious, yet invisible, spying glass, that should give the student ant a glimpse of the continent of China. Oh! I must stop: I shall turn my own brain, which, while it is launching into an ocean of universes, is still admiring pismire Herschel. That he should not have a *wise* look, does not surprise me—he may be stupified at his own discoveries; or to make them, it might require a head constructed too simply to contain any diversity of attention to puny objects. Sir Isaac Newton, they say, was so absorbed in his pursuits, as to be something of a changeling in worldly matters; and when he descended to earth and conjecture, he was no phenomenon.

I will alight from my altitudes, and confine myself to our own ant-hill. Have you seen, madam, the horrible mandate of the Emperor to General Murray? Think of that insect's threatening to sacrifice thousands of his fellow pismires to what he calls *his dignity!* the dignity of a mite, that, supposing itself as superior as an earwig, meditates preventing hosts of its own

species from enjoying the happiness and the moment of existence that has been allotted to them in an innumerable succession of ages! But while scorn, contempt, and hatred, kindle against the imperial insect, admiration crowds in for the brave pismires who so pathetically deprecate their doom, yet seem resigned to it! I think I never read anything more noble, more touching, than the remonstrance of the Deputies to Prince Kaunitz.

If tyrant dignity is ready to burst on Brabant, appearances with us seem also too warlike. I shall be very sorry if it arrives. I flattered myself, that in our humiliated state, the consequence of *our dignity*, we should at least be tame and tranquil for the remnant of my time; but what signifies care about moments? I will return to your letter; which set me afloat on the vasty deep of speculation, to which I am very unequal and do not love. My understanding is more on a level with your ball, and meditations on the destruction of Gorhambury, which I regret. It was in a very crazy state, but deserved to be propped; the situation is by no means delightful.

I called at Sir Joshua's, while he was at Ampthill, and saw his Hercules for Russia. I did not at all admire it: the principal babe put me in mind of what I read so often, but have not seen, *the monstrous craws*. Master Hercules's knees are as large as, I presume, the late lady Guildford's. *Blind* Tiresias is *staring* with horror at the terrible spectacle. If Sir Joshua is satisfied with his own departed picture, it is

more than the possessors or posterity will be. I think he ought to be paid in annuities only for so long as his pictures last: one should not grudge him the first fruits.

Mr. Gibbon's three volumes I shall certainly read. I am fond of quartos: and I dare to say he has laboured these, and I shall be quite satisfied if they are equal to the first *tome*. The long minuet you may be sure I have, as I get everything I can of Mr. Bunbury's.

Though I have wandered into another sheet, I will not be so unconscionable as to fill more of it; and make your ladyship repent your condescension of having awakened me. I will only ask whether you have heard that the Duchess of Kingston has adopted the eldest Meadows, paid his debts, given him 600*l.* a-year, and intends to make him her heir? Methinks this is robbing Peter to pay *Peter*.

Stay, I forgot to tell you, madam, that Miss Boyle has designed and carved in marble three medallions of boys, for a chimney-piece, at Ditton. Lady Di. has done two pictures for "Macbeth" and "Lear:" the latter with the madman is very fine. Now, I have finished, indeed.

LETTER CCCVI.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 15, 1787.

Of such of my editions, madam, as you say Lord Ossory has not, I am sure I had no doubt but I had

given him all but one. The last time I was at Ampthill, I did desire his lordship to look if he had all my publications, and told him I would, as far as I could, perfect his set, as I will now do; and I am glad to know which he wants, that I may supply him while I can.

Pray excuse me, if I say a little more on this occasion, though it will only be collaterally.

I have been long vexed at the ridiculous prices given for my editions. It could not be flattering to the vainest author or editor upon earth; for their dearness is solely to be attributed to their scarcity; and a collector who pays extravagantly for a rare book, will never read *in* it, or allow anybody else, for the virgin purity of the margin is as sacred with him as the text.

When the "Anecdotes of Painting" became so ridiculously dear, which happened by collectors of portraits cutting out the prints, and using the text, I suppose, for waste paper, I printed a small edition without prints, at half-a-crown a volume, that painters and artists might purchase them cheaply, and that nobody might pay dearly, unless by choice. This is all I can do to remedy a folly I did not certainly intend to occasion. Those anecdotes are the only thing I ever published of any use; and if I reprinted my other trumpery, nobody would buy them; and I cannot afford to put myself to great expense to save the money of foolish virtuosos.

I am sorry, too, on many accounts, that this idle list has been printed—but I have several reasons for

lamenting daily that I ever was either author or editor. Your ladyship has often suspected me to continue being the former, against which I have solemnly protested, nor except the little dab on Christina of Pisan (on which I shall tell you one of my regrets) I have not written six pages on any one subject for some years. No, madam, I have lived to attain a little more sense; and were I to recommence my life, and thought as I do now, I do not believe that any consideration could induce me to be an author. I wish to be forgotten; and though that will be my lot, it will not be so, so soon as I wish.—In short, (and it is pride, not humility, that is the source of my present sentiments,) I have great contempt for middling writers. We have not only betrayed want of genius, but want of judgment; how can one of my grovelling class open a page of a standard-author, and not blush at his own stuff? I took up "The First Part of Henry IV." t'other day, and was ready to set fire to my own printing-house, "*Unimitable, unimitated Falstaff!*" cried Johnson, in a fit of just enthusiasm; and yet, amongst all his repentances, I do not find that Johnson repented of having written his own "Irene."

Well! I should grow tedious on this subject, madam, if I gave a loose to my own reflections on that ground —I will only add two circumstances. Not designing to add "Christina," as I found Lord Salisbury was *not* a noble author, I printed only forty copies. For this I have been abused and called *illiberal*, for not letting

all the possessors of my noble authors have that scrap. Nay, a Mr. Ireland, a collector, (I believe with interested views,) bribed my engraver to sell him a print of the frontispiece, has etched it himself, and I have heard, has reprinted the piece—and I suppose will sell some copies as part of the forty. I could tell you twenty of these foolish grievances; one of which leads to my second circumstance.

In the list for which Lord Ossory asks, is the description of this place; now, though printed, I have entirely kept it up, and mean to do so while I live, for very sound reasons, madam, as you will allow. I am so tormented by visitors to my house, that two or three rooms are not shewn, to abridge their stay. In the description are specified all the enamels and miniatures, &c., which I keep under lock and key. If the visitors got the book into their hands, I should never get them out of the house, and they would want to see fifty articles which I do not choose they should handle and paw. The mention of the description came out by two accidents. I gave an imperfect account of my collection to an old Mr. Cole, a clergyman of Cambridge, many years ago, and on his death it was sold to a bookseller. It set some gossiping virtuosos on inquiry: Mr. Gulston bribed my engravers to sell him some of my prints; Mr. Gough, without asking my leave, published a list of ten of those engravings in his "Topography," and has occasioned my being teazed for specimens, which I have refused. The list of my editions was procured by

some of these *liberal* artifices — and yet is not complete—yet I am sure I have said enough, madam, to convince you how much cause I have to regret having exposed myself to the paltry fame that belongs to an Aldus or an Elzevir, without having deserved myself to be printed by either of them!

To others these calamities must sound comic, and I own I am happy not to have more ponderous: but it is the consequence of living much alone: one must grow occupied by one's own trifling aches, when vacant of graver matter. The worst is, that solitary people are apt to grow peevish—I hope I am not so—indeed, on stating my mishaps, I see how insignificant they are, and laugh at them. I hope, madam, you will do so too, and at me, if you please.

So little do I remember what I write, that I cannot for my life recollect what I said in my last, to which your ladyship replies, *that Lord Ossory thinks Hercules will fail.* If you trouble yourself to explain, tell me if you know a conundrum I heard t'other day; *Why is a bad wife better than a good one?*—the solution is good, though not very civil to Eves. Oh! it has just started into my head that Hercules is Sir Joshua's; I doubt my poor memory begins to peel off; it is not the first crack I have perceived in it. My brother, Sir Edward, made the same complaint to me before he died, and I suggested a comfort to him, that does not satisfy myself. I told him the memory is like a cabinet, the drawers of which can hold no more than they can. Fill them with papers; if you

add more, you must shove out some of the former. Just so with the memory; there is scarce a day in our lives that something, serious or silly, does not place itself there, and, consequently, the older we grow, the more must be displaced to make room for new contents. "Oh!" said my brother, "but how do you account for most early objects remaining?"—why, the drawers are lined with gummed taffety; the first ingredients stick; those piled higgledy-piggledy upon them, are tossed out without difficulty, as new are stuffed in; yet I am come to think that mice and time may gnaw holes in the sides, and nibble the papers too.

LETTER CCCVII.

Oct. 4, 1787.

Nay, madam, I know not how to steer between Mistress Scylla, impudent vanity, and Madam Charybdis, affected modesty. You reprove me for being decently humble, and then tell me you shew my letters to Mr. Fitzpatrick. Do you think I can like that? and can I help suspecting that you are laughing at me for a credulous old simpleton? Indeed I do suspect so, and am not such a gudgeon as to swallow the hook with which you keep me in play. Mr. Fitzpatrick has too much sense and taste to be amused with the gossiping babble of my replies to the questions you put to me; and I can have no satisfaction in scribbling the trifles

I send you, if they are to be seen, or if I am to ponder and guard them against being downright dotage—and how shall I discover that they are not so, if they are; where is the touchstone on which old age is to try its decays? It will strike seventy to-morrow, and who will be so much my friend as to tell me that it might as well strike four score? With these convictions staring me in the face, do not imagine, my good madam, that I suppose I can entertain one of the liveliest young men in England, and who passes his time with Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, and Mr. Hare. It will not be kind in you either to shew my letters, or to believe that I write them to be admired. I have long been honoured with your correspondence; I lead a most insipid life, and when I hear from an old acquaintance, I own frankly I am glad to chat and throw off all the foolish things that have floated last on my mind, and that have served to amuse me for want of better employment. My letters are only fit to be seen by those who have no more rational diversions.

Your ladyship asks me why Mr. Fitzpatrick's "Dorinda" is not specified in the catalogue of my impressions: recollect, if you please, that I told you that the list was an imperfect one, and not such as I avow; but I let newspapers and magazines say what they please of me without setting them right. Whoever trusts them must thank himself for being imposed on in points, indeed, so unimportant, that it matters not whether they possess truth or falsehood. This very month a magazine has republished a tale which I do not remember,

and of which I will swear part is false. It is that many years ago, I gave Mr. Beauclerc my tragedy, with injunctions not to shew it to Garrick or Dr. Johnson. I doubt the fact very much, but am sure the reason assigned for not communicating it to the former, is absolutely false: viz., because Garrick was such a goose as to prefer "Agis" to "Douglas;"—goose, and goosissime he was, if he did, but I will take my death I never heard he did; nor do I believe that any one ever did, unless the author did, who was such a goose too, as to write "Agis," ay and all his other plays, after having written "Douglas." If there is a grain of truth in the tale, it may have arisen from what I may have mentioned, and which was true, that Home, the author, shewed me "Agis" in MS., and never visited or bowed to me afterwards, because I was too sincere to commend (I think it was not "Agis," but) his "Siege of Aquileia." I doubt, too, the truth about Johnson; you know, madam, I never reverenced him, yet had no reason to be in terrible fear of his criticisms, for he really, as far as I have heard, always spoke civilly of my publications.

For another copy of the tragedy, your ladyship shall have it, if you please, but not the Strawberry edition, of which I have not one left. I printed an edition, when the surreptitious one was advertised; but on advertising my own, it stopped the pinchbeck one, and so I avoided publishing it at all. Oh! these would be pretty details for the eye of Mr. Fitzpatrick! indeed, I ought to blush at sending them to Lady Os-

sory; but if you will converse with a printer, what can he tell you but the anecdotes of his shop.

Oct. 5.

I began this in town, where I have been for two days, to see Lady Cadogan, who has lain in, and had not time to finish it. Neither the egg of war nor the egg of peace is hatched yet; so probably the old hen of negotiation may sit on both till spring, and then the chick of the former, being true game, may burst its shell; but, in truth, I know nothing, and saving compassion for the follies and woes of mankind, care very little about the matter. I know one loves one's country, because one has done it the honour of being born in it, and one takes the religion that happens to be in waiting at the time of one's birth, for much the same wise reason; but bating those grave prejudices, I am grown tolerably indifferent about Europe's bloody noses, and cannot love and hate just as treaties cross over and figure in.

I am equally in the dark about any acting that has been at Park Place; and for the report of a match between Lady Constant and Sir Brilliant, I believe it no more than the story of St. George and the Dragon.

Monsieur Le Chauvelin's verses I think I have seen, and do like prodigiously, especially "La Gourmandise," "L'Orgueil," "La Paresse," "L'Envie," in short, all, though "Avarice" the least.

Thus I have answered, madam, and prosed according to custom, and will only tell you more that I dined last Monday at Bushy (for you know I have

more *penchant* for ministers that are out than when they are in) and never saw a more interesting scene. Lord North's spirits, good humour, wit, sense, drollery, are as perfect as ever—the unremitting attention of Lady North and his children, most touching. Mr. North leads him about, Miss North sits constantly by him, carves meat, watches his every motion, scarce puts a bit into her own lips; and if one cannot help commending her she colours with modesty and sorrow till the tears gush into her eyes—if ever loss of sight could be compensated it is by so affectionate a family. Good-night, madam.

LETTER CCCVIII.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 3, 1787.

YOUR ladyship ought not to blame my silence which you certainly occasioned yourself. Could I be such a coxcomb as to write letters on purpose that they might be shewn? I have scarce ever failed to answer yours instantly, and chiefly to questions you have asked; and in that careless hurry have scribbled the first trifle or nonsense that presented itself. I should be ashamed of doing so were my letters to be shewn; and more ashamed of *preparing* them for inspection,—in short, I cannot write fine letters, nor would if I could,—I am too old to care a tush for reputation; and on the other hand cannot in cold blood invite people to laugh at me. Living in a very

confined circle I rarely hear news till stale; and thus disqualified for the easiest and best part of a correspondent, I was not at all unwilling to give up an employment that could entertain you so little. It was no shadow of disrespect to you, madam, that silenced me; but just so much regard to myself as preserves me from silly vanity, and the appearance of it.

Though I received your ladyship's letter on Saturday, and began this reply incontinently, yet I could not find a minute for finishing it, for being confined by a slight attack of gout, I can be denied to nobody and so many people came in, and their hour of dressing being so much later than mine of dining, they were so good as to bestow their vacant time on me, their idleness being of much more consequence to them than my obsolete regularity, and consequently my dinner and the post clashing, and Sunday and the post being alike incompatible, I was forced to defer this till today.

The return of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester engaged me but the first two or three days, for etiquette is grown so antiquated in five years and a half, that, though the duke does not think forms and ceremonies the least delectable part of the rubric, he is forced to relax, and they both now return visits in a morning and go to assemblies in an evening; *in* course my presence is little necessary, and I can lay myself aside as Polonius would do, though not shocked as he would be at the dereliction of good old customs. However, if courts have lost their energy, it is made

up to the world by the community of princes. Besides the goodly display at St. James's, there are half-a-dozen royal personages somewhere or other every night.

In France their Highnesses of Orleans and Bourbon are banished—as far as Knightsbridge and Kensington. The monarch sat from nine in the morning till five in the evening to hear philippics—and may see louisd'ors representing him like Corniger Ammon: the Duke of Gloucester has actually brought over one of them—after such a chapter on demi-gods it would be profane to mix mortal affairs, and luckily I know nothing of this nether earth; your ladyship's, &c.

LETTER CCCIX.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 15, 1787.

I AM so shocked, madam, at the account I have this instant received from your ladyship of the fire in your house, that I must for a while postpone what relates to myself. I heartily congratulate the escapes of your persons and the preservation of your dwelling; but I do see that you have still a terrible calamity left, your suspicions, which seem too well founded. Nor can I suggest any comfort but the hope that, as you think no discovery probable, there was no internal villainy, but that it was an attempt at plunder by *outward* banditti, who had no opportunity of firing the house within. They seem to have meant to draw

attention to the stables, and then to have conveyed combustibles to the top of the house, perhaps by ladders—but as I am not master exactly of the *locale*, I don't know whether my conjecture was a probable one. Indeed it is horrid to be exposed at all to such violence; yet it is much lighter than to be distracted between the dread of having execrable servants, and the horror of suspecting the innocent. I remember when General Conway's house in Warwick Street was set on fire, I was persuaded, though I did not utter a word, that his own *maître d'hôtel* was the criminal. He turned livid, looked wrapped in thought, and would scarce speak a syllable. He was a most worthy honest creature, and as the sole criminal, who was taken and confessed everything, and was executed, absolutely removed every tittle of suspicion from the *maître-d'hôtel*, it proved that the poor man, being necessarily interrogated, could not support the idea of a possibility of guilt lighting on him. It had been a young secretary of Richmond House, who having frequently copied papers for Mr. Conway, and had married Mrs. Damer's maid, was familiar in the house, had entered it in the evening unnoticed, and had concealed himself in a back room till five in the morning, when he broke open and robbed Mr. Conway's drawers, and then set fire to a number of letters and papers that lay on them, in the library under Mr. Conway's and Lady Ailesbury's bedchamber. I hope at least, madam, that you will discover some such extrinsic villain.

I must particularly thank your ladyship for recollect-

ing your charge against me in such an hour of distress; your goodness in telling me your misfortune, and your saying you know how much I should interest myself in it, as I do most cordially, proves, I trust, that you neither really blame me, nor suspect me of becoming less attached to you than I have been for so many, many years. No, madam, you do know, I am sure, that it is my own vanity and pride that has made me grow a less punctual correspondent. You have often heard me declare how jealous I am of growing superannuated, and how much I dread exposing myself in the dregs of life. I have not those happy spirits of some ancients, who totter on to the last, and do not find out, what everybody else does, that they are ridiculous. Why should I suppose that when every limb is decayed, my inside should remain more sound? My head never was strong enough for me to trust to its defying the buffets of seventy years; within this hour I have experienced its weakness. Lord Carmarthen called on me in the midst of my letter, and I have almost lost the post, by keeping him with telling him stories of his great-grandfather, whom I remember. I can, therefore, say nothing now of the future play at Richmond House, or of that at Ampthill; but you shall not lose a very good-humoured story of Lord North. Colonel Barré made him a visit lately; Lord North said,—"Colonel Barré, nobody will suspect us of insincerity, if we say that we should always be overjoyed to *see* each other."

P.S.—Pray acquaint me if you make any discovery.

Postscript to my Saturday's letter, Dec. 16, 1787.

On considering your ladyship's account of your conflagrations more deliberately, I perceive that I mistook, and thought the *top* of the faggots had been at the top of the house. Now I conceive, or at least guess, how the event happened. I conclude some villains who knew something of your seat, but had not entrance, set fire to the stables to draw the whole attention of the family; and, that lurking at a little distance in the dark, one of them, seeing their plan succeed, and all the doors of your house left open by the servants hurrying to the stables, slipped in and set fire to the faggots, intending to plunder plate in the double confusion.

This, detestable as it was, I hope was the case.

You did not say, madam, whether the stables were burnt down, nor what the house suffered.

The play at Richmond House is to be "The Wonder," with "The Guardian." The new performers are Lord Henry Fitzgerald, who never played in comedy before, but is good in tragedy; a Miss Hamilton, niece of Lord Abercorn, and a Captain Merry. Mrs. Hobart does not play in those pieces, but is to choose her own part in the next. In return I shall expect a detail of the theatre at Ampthill.

I have had no formal gout, but several skirmishes with it that have confined me for two or three days at a time; yet I have been once at the Opera, and was tired to death; and though I came away the moment it was ended did not get home till a quarter before

twelve. The learned call the music good, but there is nothing to shew the humour and action of the Storace and Morelli. I bought the book to read at home, because the Emperor paid 1000*l.* for the piece as a satire on the King of Sweden—how, the Lord knows. The plot is taken from Voltaire's deposed kings at Venice in his "Candide," of whom only two are introduced, King Theodore and Sultan Achmet. The words are ten times stupider than our operas generally are; nor do I yet know that the King of Sweden, to whom I am no more partial than Cæsar is, was ever deposed. In short, if it is a satire on any mortal it is one on Cæsar himself, for having paid so dear for such unintelligible nonsense.

My elderly cousin, Mr. Thomas Walpole, has espoused the sister of Monsieur Francès, Madame de Villegagnon, at Paris, who is no infant neither,—but that is their affair.

I am going to tell you a story, madam, that perhaps you have heard better from Mr. Fitzpatrick, who was one of the company. Lord Westcote wrote lately to Lord North, that as his lordship was in so deplorable a condition, he, Lord Westcote, should go over to Mr. Pitt. Soon after, the speaker, not knowing of that missive, invited Lord Westcote to dinner with a set of the opposition, who did know a little more of the matter, though pretending ignorance. The conversation soon fell on Lord George Gordon's Mosaic beard—on which one of the company said it was lucky when *converts* wore distinguishing marks by which they

might be reconnoitred, and the whole dinner was carried on in the same tormenting style.

You will not be less diverted with an anecdote of your aunt. She had a mind to go to Gloucester House, but declared she could not till an affair was arranged, for she had had a quarrel with the Duchess of Gloucester in the year *one*—no mortal could guess what she meant, nor do I know yet, for her Grace of Bedford herself was not born in 1700, nor the Duchess of Gloucester till 1735. The latter said they never could have had a quarrel, for they never had been intimate enough. This anachronism (in her Grace's memory) has somehow or other been rectified, and she has been at Gloucester House.

This is an inordinate postscript, and I will add no more, but that Strawberry has felt many a twitch since the fire at Ampthill.

Dec. 17, 1787.

I was at a rehearsal last night and amazed. Lord Henry is a prodigy, a perfection — all passion, nature and ease ; you never saw so genuine a lover. Garrick was a monkey to him in Don Felix : then he is so much the man of fashion, and is so genteel,—in short, when people of quality can act, they must act their own parts so much better than others can mimic them! Mr. Merry is an excellent Lissardo too.

LETTER CCCX.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 15, 1788.

ALL joy to your ladyship on the success of your theatric campaign. I do think the representation of plays as entertaining and ingenious, as choosing king and queen, and the gambols and mummeries of our ancestors at Christmas; or as making one's neighbours and all their servants drunk, and sending them home ten miles in the dark with the chance of breaking their necks by some comical overturn. I wish I could have been one of the audience—but alas! I am like the African lamb, and can only feed on the grass and herbs that grow within my reach.

I can make no returns yet from the theatre at Richmond House; the duke and duchess do not come till the birthday, and I have been at no more rehearsals, being satisfied with two of the play. Prologue or epilogue there is to be none, as neither the plays nor the performers, in general, are new. The "Jealous Wife" is to succeed for the exhibition of Mrs. Hobart, who could have no part in "The Wonder."

My histrionic acquaintance spreads; I supped at Lady Dorothy Hotham's with Mrs. Siddons, and have visited and been visited by her, and have seen and liked her much, yes, very much, in the passionate scenes in "Percy;" but I do not admire her in cool declamation, and find her voice very hollow and defective. I asked her in which part she would most

wish me to see her? She named Portia in the "Merchant of Venice;" but I begged to be excused. With all my enthusiasm for Shakspeare, it is one of his plays that I like the least; the story of the caskets is silly, and, except the character of Shylock, I see nothing beyond the attainment of a mortal: Euripides or Racine or Voltaire might have written all the rest. Moreover, Mrs. Siddons's warmest devotees do not hold her above a demigoddess in comedy. I have chosen "Athenais," in which she is to appear soon; her scorn is admirable.

Of news I have heard none but foreign, nor those more circumstantially than the papers recount. The Russian empress, the Austrian emperor, and Mount Vesuvius, are playing the devil with the world. The Parliaments of France, in the usual disproportion of good to evil, are aiming at wrenching from the crown some freedom for their country—at a fortunate and wise moment, for the crown is poor, and cannot bribe even the nobility, who will mutiny since they cannot sell themselves. The elements, too, as if their pensions also were struck off, have vented their wrath on some of the costly Cones at Cherbourg. Well! we have a little breathing time, and may play the fool.

A propos to Russia, did you advert, madam, to the identity of *Prince Alexis of Brunswick*, for so the "Gazette" was pleased to call him, as if he was nothing but a cadet of a German house. Yet he was the second son of Princess Anne of Mecklenberg, and brother of poor John, the butchered Czar. Alexis was

consequently the hereditary right heir of the empire, if right had any title in despotic countries, where accident, address, force, or murder, bestow the crown. It was Mr. Coxe brought me acquainted with that unfortunate branch, and the best thing I know of Catherine was her releasing Alexis and his sisters; but what excuses her imprisoning their father Prince Antony for life, who had no more title to the crown than she herself, or exactly the same—the having married a right candidate.

Puppet-shows are coming on, the birthday, the parliament, and the trials of Hastings and his imp, Elijah. They will fill the town, I suppose.

Have you discovered nothing of your incendiaries, madam? I swear by the beard of St. George Gordon there seems to have been more malice than a spirit of robbery in the double conflagration.

If the young actress who played *Kitty* so admirably in "High Life below Stairs," is not engaged at either of the theatres at Blenheim or Winstay, I believe she might have a large salary and free benefit at Richmond House, where they are in sad want of an *Ines* in the "Wonder"—and I am sure no daughter of Ampthill has *crooked legs.*

LETTER CCCXI.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 14, 1788.

THOUGH I cannot use my right hand, as it is muffled up with a little gout, I must send your ladyship a line or two, as I am extremely concerned at what I have heard. Lady Waldegrave told me yesterday that your house had again been on fire. It is shocking, indeed; and I wonder you have courage to stay in it, without a whole garrison. I beg at your leisure, madam, you will tell me if you make any discoveries.

I got cold last week at the play at Richmond House, or rather a violent cough, which, according to the harlequinades of the gout, turned into pain in one of my fingers, and I hope will make its exit there soon, for it is but a slight gambol. Mrs. Damer is ill and the play is postponed till Monday, if Lord Henry is not run away with in the mean time, for he has raised a thousand passions.

I will not prolong my letter, having had nothing else to say, and now propose to stop my ears that I may not be tired to death with hearing of Mr. Hastings's trial. Adieu, madam, yours, &c.

LETTER CCCXII.

Strawberry Hill, July 9, 1788.

To be sure, madam, I was not in good charity with you for not coming to Strawberry, which you have

abandoned for these three years. You think to make it up by inquiring after my howd'yedo-ness, and, though I will forgive once more, I will inform your ladyship that one's self-love is not at all limited to one's specific person, but insinuates itself into everything that belongs to one—to one's house, to one's garden, to one's collection, and

"Feels at each thread, and lives along the line."

People may cram one with attentions, and affront one at the same time, by neglecting some trifling object on which one's heart is set. Lovers gain ground by doating on their charmer's lap-dog, and toad-eaters worship their patroness's taste in every circumstance: they admire her attitude on a hassock or at a quinze-table. These are only general hints; but the corollary is, that Lady Anne is much more in my good graces than the countess, her honoured mother.

Still I own myself obliged to your ladyship for the printed advertisement, which I had not seen. Unluckily, my self-love does not extend to my writings, and I had rather you had made a visit to Strawberry than an addition to my royal authors. As I raise none from the dead till they have been interred in the church-yard of the temple of fame, Cheltenham, it is to be hoped, will save me the trouble of a codicil.

Indeed, I have been in doubt whether I had not lately *put up* a prince who had some title to figure in my catalogue. Mlle. Keralio, in her *Collection des meilleurs ouvrages François composés par des femmes,*

has produced two little poems, composed in English, by the Duke of Orleans, who was prisoner here for five-and-twenty years after the battle of Agincourt; but, alas! they are as indifferent as if they had been composed by the present ornament of his title! and therefore, though Christina of Pisan had lent her lover, Lord Salisbury, merit enough to be adopted, I shall not naturalize the French prince.

Mr. Selwyn has been confined in town by a fever, and I have not seen him since the royal progress was intended. I do hope his Matson will be illustrated again, as it was at the siege of Gloucester. How happy he would be to have the present Prince of Wales and Duke of York leave their names, with a penknife, on his window, as the sons of Charles I. did, though, unless some of the personages end as unfortunately, he will never be so fond of them.

You know, I suppose, madam, that the second prince has purchased Oatlands. That, too, is a circumstance that will chime with Selwyn's partialities. King Charles's third son was born there, and called Henry of Oatlands. I am to go thither to-morrow to see the grotto, which I have neglected doing hitherto, though so much within my reach; yes, I am going to see the *speluncam* where—

"Dido Dux et —"

My verdure begins to recover its bloom, madam, like yours. I did not despair, for, in this country, nobody pays his debts like rain. It may destroy

your flowers, but you cannot complain of want of fruit; cherries, apples, walnuts, are more exuberant than their leaves; I don't believe that a single blossom will fail of coming of age. Cherries, I am told, are cried in London at a halfpenny a pound,—Kentish ones, I mean,—which is cheaper than they have been since William the Conqueror landed there.

Having no news for your eye or ear, I inclose a drawing that I got a young lady at Richmond to copy for me t' other day, and which Lady Anne may multiply easily, by tracing over it against the window. I hope you will be as much diverted with it as I was; it proves the truth of the old saying, that two heads are better than one.

As I find I am already too late for our post, which comes in at eleven and goes out at one, for the benefit of trade,—not for the trade of correspondence, I am sure,—I will leave a corner till I have been at Oatlands.

Thursday night.

Woe is me! I don't know whether it is that I am grown old and cross, but I have been disappointed. Oatlands, that my memory had taken it into its head was the centre of paradise, is not half so Elysian as I used to think. The grotto, a magnificent structure of shell-work, is a square regular edifice, and, which never happed to grotto before, lives up one pair of stairs, and yet only looks on a bason of dirty water; in short, I am returned to my own Thames with delight, and envy none of the princes of the earth.

LETTER CCCXIII.

Strawberry Hill, July 22, 1788.

I KNOW well, madam, that I ought to have thanked you sooner for the double heads drawn by Lady Anne, who has married them very happily; but, however full the heart may be of gratitude, thanks will not fill a letter, and you certainly had rather receive a phial of news than a quart of effusions of all the virtues that could be distilled; but, alas! my laboratory is as empty of novelty as of such essences, and like an apothecary's shop, has only empty gallipots, with labels of what they ought to contain, gratitude excepted, which I have in the root.

You say, madam, you did not leave yourself room to form a new administration. I have plainly paper enough before me for that purpose; but there too, I am no adept, and content myself, like the sovereign maker of ministers, with being more glad of those I get rid of, than fond of their successors. Were I in town, I should chiefly take care to avoid being within reach of the bludgeon fist of Mrs. H., who must be in a sweet mood on having lost her trident, after all her intrigues, to fix it in her brother's hand. I started prodigiously into her favour the last time General Conway came into place, and she told me her eldest niece was passionately fond of poetry, and died to read my tragedy, which I lent her. Mr. Conway went out, and I never heard more of Miss's taste for the *belles lettres*. In her room I have got a new admirer, though an anony-

mous one. It is the gentleman who has dedicated to me and Sir Joshua Reynolds two quarto pieces, called "Imperfect Hints for a new Edition of Shakspeare." In one of the notes the author with great goodnature, calls me *Time-honoured Lancaster*. Beshrew me, little did I think that my shadow of a person would in any point ever come in contact with the giant mould of John of Gaunt; but I find that one has nothing to do but to live long enough, and somehow or other, one may grow like to anybody; but I must tell your ladyship of a more diverting application, if not of an ancient passage, at least of venerable customs. You may know perhaps, that in days of yore, the flaps of seats in choirs of cathedrals were decorated with sculptures, sometimes with legends, oftener, alas! with devices, at best ludicrous, frequently not fit to meet the eye of modesty! Well, madam, two new stalls being added in the church of St. George at Windsor, as niches for the supernumerary knights that have been added, the costume has been observed and carried on in the new flaps—not to call up a blush in the cheek of mother church, but in the true catholic spirit; one of the bas reliefs I do not know, but probably the martyrdom of St. Edmund the King; the other is the ineffected martyrdom of George the King, by Margaret Nicholson. The body-coachman is standing by, to ascertain the precise moment. If you had not heard of this decoration, I will not say, madam, that I had no news to send you, at least I may subscribe myself,

Your ladyship's humble clerke and antiquarie, H. W.

LETTER CCCXIV.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 16, 1788.

Most true, madam, neither my person nor age seem suited to be prominent on the hustings; but my long connection with Lord John's grandmother, and thence with him, made it impossible for me to avoid contributing my vote; but I contrived so well, that I was in my own house again by twenty minutes after nine in the morning; and by choosing a Monday, before the mob had recovered their drunkenness of the Sabbath, there was much less crowd in the garden than on a common market-day. A week later, and I must have been carried on a chairman's horse—an exhibition I should have excused myself: in a word, I have been confined a fortnight by the gout in my left arm, hand, and knee, and cannot yet put on a coat. Having had two fits in the winter, I expected nothing less than a third; now I find that there are three tyrants against whom no prescription holds, and I shall add to that righteous maxim of the lawyers, *Nullum tempus occurrit regi, et ecclesiæ, et podagræ:* however long ago, however lately they have signed a release, they can re-enter on the premises and take possession.

Mr. Selwyn, I do not doubt, is superlatively happy. I am curious to know what relics he has gleaned from the royal visit, that he can *bottle* up and place in his *sanctum sanctorum.* Peter Pindar probably has col-

lected other droppings. *A propos*, madam, have you seen the two volumes of "Extracts from the Letters of the Regent's Mother to Queen Caroline?" They will entertain you exceedingly, and I have no doubt of their authenticity. I know these royal dames gossiped together; and Madame d'Orleans was so careless, that one of our Queen's letters got into the "Utrecht Gazette" at the time, and contained an intrigue of one of her women of the bedchamber.

The Selwyn I do not expect soon at Richmond, for the Carlisles are going to Cheltenham; but so many loadstones draw him, that I, who have no attraction, seldom see him. In truth I wonder your ladyship has patience with me as a correspondent, for it is difficult to be one of this world less than I am. Fontenelle and others have made the dead converse, but you *hold a talk* with a Strulbrug, who is not half so good company; nay, I should scarce have been taken notice of at the election, unless it was supposed that it was my ghost that appeared, and consequently I shall be charged as one of Lord John's bad votes; and Mr. Samuel Martin would be ready to swear to my non-existence—he who, I have good reason to think, above a dozen years ago, bribed my own gardener, when I was very ill in London, to go to town and insist upon *seeing* me. As at least then I was alive, I was so ill-natured as to give him ocular proof. In another illness, when his hopes were again raised, he sent to my deputy and threatened to turn him out, should I fail, if he did not inform him of the true worth of my office. I made an epigram on

the occasion, in which I offered to satisfy him myself, except by dying. I forget all but the two last lines:

"—— But as I love not target, meat, or wine,
Ask me whate'er you will—except to dine."

But I think my living to the length of an epic poem, is more severe than any distich; and I do not believe there is an archbishop in England that would not willingly be so uncharitable as to live to the age of Methusalem, if he knew who was to be his successor.

Are not you diverted, madam, with the nonplus of Cæsar and Semiramis? To be beaten at her own door by a pert little Swede, when she was preparing to be crowned in Santa Sophia: what if she should be overturned as Pindarically as she was exalted! I have an instance of a deposed sovereign in my neighbourhood, of a very different character, the late Queen of Pennsylvania. Lady Juliana Penn, once mistress of a revenue of 36,000*l.* a-year, is now lodging modestly, humbly, and tranquilly at Petersham on 600*l.* a-year; and her mind is so reconciled to her fortune, that she is still very handsome. She is to breakfast here soon, and I shall think Matson was not more honoured.

LETTER CCCXV.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 6, 1788.

I AM not apt to boast, madam; yet, considering that I have had three legal fits of the gout in eight months, I am as much a Hercules again as a gentleman

cut out of paper can be. Nay I have been to Park-place on a pilgrimage to little Master Stonehenge, *alias* the Druids' Temple from Jersey, which is now erected on the back of an eminent hill, with two wings of fir groves at small distances, and is seen from the garden over a long ridge of firs that shoot up from the side of the beautiful descending valley. Every morsel of stone that formed the circle originally, is placed to an inch in its primitive position; and though the whole is diminutive, yet being seen on the horizon, it looks very highpriestly, and in that broken country may easily be taken for respectable ruins of an ancient castle, or Caractacus's own summer-residence. Park-place is now one of the spots the most deserving to be visited in our island; for, besides the variety of the ground, the diversity of the landscapes and prospects, all glittering with meanders of the Thames at a distance, or washed by it as it borders the shores, what singular objects are to be seen there!—the rocky bridge, the Druidic temple, Lady Ailesbury's worked pictures, and Henley-bridge, with Mrs. Damer's colossal heads of the Thame and Isis. In short, Park-place would not have been an unworthy codicil to Lady Anne's tour, though two of my favourites, the historic Castle of Warwick, and the pretty appendix to history, Matson, were delightful ingredients of it. Methinks the loyalty of the master of the latter was not displayed with the judgment of an old courtier; especially as I believe his own sentiments were as little in harmony with what he left and what he removed, as with his sovereign's.

Ragley is superb, that is, the situation, and the dimensions of the house, but has nothing else to occupy or detain one a moment. I remember, when I was at Matson, the poor mad gentlewoman who made an aviary of the cathedral, in hopes that the soul of her only daughter would come and pick some seeds in the shape of a robin-red-breast; panes were left void of glass in the windows, lest the ghostly dicky-birds should cut their feet, and pans of seeds were dispersed around, and constant feasts made, as if Bel and the Dragon were come to breakfast—but the Chapter found their account, for the metempsychosian gentlewoman new-paved the tabernacle, and painted and white-washed, so no church or cage was ever kept more snug.

I allow your ladyship's observations on the Duchess of Orleans, and own she often censures Mad. de Maintenon in the wrong place: and certainly knew no more than she could not help knowing; but most of those traits are very characteristic, and I firmly believe her, for her sincerity on her own homeliness and ugly hands, shew her frank love of truth as far as it came within her reach. I have since been reading in the "Esprit des Journaux" an account of a late Bishop of Amiens, who was a saint, and yet had a great deal of wit. A lady went to consult him whether she might wear *rouge;* she had been with several *directeurs*, but some were so severe, and some so relaxed, that she could not satisfy her conscience, and therefore was come to Monseigneur to decidè for her, and would rest by his

sentence. "I see, madam," said the good prelate, "what the case is, some of your casuists forbid *rouge* totally; others will permit you to wear as much as you please—now for my part, I love a medium in all things, and therefore I permit you to wear *rouge* on one cheek only."

I cannot say there will be quite so much wit in the anecdote I am going to tell you next. Lady Greenwich t'other day, in a conversation with Lady Tweeddale, named the Saxons (the Lord knows how that happened)—"the Saxons, my dear!" cried the marchioness, "who were they?"—"Lord, madam, did your ladyship never read the History of England?" "No, my dear; pray who wrote it?"—don't it put you in mind of Mattœ and the Allogobroges in Grammont? *Voici* a second dialogue of the same dame with the Duchess of Argyll, who went to her to hire a house the marchioness has here on Twickenham Common, for her brother General Gunning.

Marchioness.—But will he pay me for it?

Duchess.—Madam, my brother can afford to pay for it—and if he cannot, I can.

Marchioness.—Oh! I am glad, I shall have my money—well, my dear, but am I to wish you joy on Lady Augusta's marriage?

Duchess.—No great joy, madam: there was no great occasion for Lady Augusta Campbell to be married.

Marchioness.—Lord, my dear, I wonder to hear *you* say so, who have been married twice.

You say, madam, you send me trash—pray, what do

I send in return?—but you must recollect, that I know no more than the Duchess of Orleans. However, as I have some paper left, if my packet is stuffed with trumpery, at least it shall be full of it, and I will add one more story which Lady Onslow told me lately. Once, when her lord was absent for a fortnight, she invited an officer to keep her company, to the great scandal of a prudish lady her neighbour, and of whom she asked leave to carry him into her pew at church, which the other, though with marks of surprise and indignation, could not avoid permitting. Sunday came, and my lady and the major—yet, though the minister had begun the service, the prude could not help whispering Lady O., "You did not tell me the major had grey hair!"

Such is the lore, madam, in which I am versed! Dowagers are the evergreens among which I am planted, and whence I can gather nothing *couleur de rose* to send you. Though we have young princes to entertain the young world with their amours and their buildings, I pass most of my elderly hours with no better company than myself, and live upon the remnant of my memory, which is not in the highest preservation. I am glad, however, to read in the newspapers, that the Archbishop of Sens is removed in France, and Monsieur Necker reinstated. I know the former well, he was my dear old friend's nephew, and is the most ambitious man alive, and in time of less distress would have been a thorn in our side, whom he hates supremely. Necker, not being a Frenchman, and

being a Protestant, cannot be our personal foe; and from his profession and habitudes, and above all, having no chance of remaining in power, but by attempting to restore their finances, war is the last instrument he will employ.

Peace is my dear delight, not Fleury's more, nor his compeer's, my father. I am glad that those gigantic incendiaries, the Russian Empress and Austrian Emperor, are so hampered, disappointed, mortified; nay, I prefer to them even the whore of Babylon and Pagan Turks, who were living quietly and honestly on the cheats and robberies of their predecessors and forefathers; and disturbed nobody. Good night! madam, when you are tired of my village tales, you may easily check me: they are welcome to die where they sprung.

LETTER CCCXVI.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 24, 1788.

MERE answers, that are not made to letters immediately, are like good things that people recollect they might have said, if they had thought on them in time: that is, very insipid, and the *à propos* very probably forgotten; yet, as I have taken out my doctor's degree in insipidity, I shall not scruple acting in character, but shall reply to the items in your ladyship's last, in as dull and downright a manner as if I were of any of the learned professions, and were consulted by you.

The fragment of prologue you sent me I like much; the description of Dr. Johnson is very just; and for

me, though I am numbered among the blue stockings, my stockings are so very thin, that not a thread aches at the laugh at them.

The person you wish to be acquainted with, madam, that you may question him on many particulars of his book, is a most worthy man, who would be very proud of the honour of being presented to your ladyship, but I doubt whether you would admire him as much as his heroes. He is very grave, very circumstantial, and his visits are not epigrams; but then he lives at the end of the world, as you do at the beginning, and you would see him but seldom.

The flaming patriot that was willing to go to the Devil to save country gentlemen from the weight of the land-tax, I should think was a Jacobite parson, who hated the Revolution, and had many disciples in the class of squires. There must have been something of the church in such zeal; and I dare to say he thought there was a back door from Hell into the vestry, by which he should escape and get absolution from some nonjuring brother. The patriots I have seen of later days have not been formed of such combustible ingredients. Oh no! *per contra;* and as Bossuet, I think, wrote against the Huguenots "L'Historie des Variations," a second part might be added on the civil variations of English Protestants or *Protesters.*

On the Duchess of Kingston I have nothing to say: I was weary of her folly and vanity long ago, and now look on her only as a big bubble that is burst.

New game, or village anecdotes, I have none to send

you, madam; nor from my own narrow circle, but that I have had a sort of *impromptu* visit from the Duke of York. He sent me word one evening that if I were alone he would come with some company and see my house; but it proving too late, he appointed the next day, and came. As I had never been presented to him, I asked leave at the door to kiss his hand, but he would not suffer it; and indeed the whole time he stayed, which was about an hour, it was impossible to be more gracious, or to say more obliging things. His uncle, the late duke, surprised me still more suddenly eight and twenty years ago. Two Dukes of York, at such a distance of time, make me seem to have lived till the same adventures come round again to me in different reigns. You must not wonder, madam, if I give myself the airs of a patriarch, when I am so like Abraham, who at very distant periods had exactly the same incidents happen to him twice from two princes about his wife; for Sarah's charms, it seems, remained in fashion as long as Strawberry's, though one should have thought that young princes would not have an appetite for anything so Gothic as either.

I have answered; I have related; and I have not a syllable more to say, but good night, my dear lady.

P.S.—In exchange for the prologue, madam, I send you the inscription which the council of Jersey sent over to General Conway, with the Druidic temple:—

"Pour des siècles caché aux regards des mortels
Cet ancien monument, ces pierres, ces autels,
Où le sang des humains offert en sacrifice
Ruissela pour des Dieux, qu'enfanta le caprice;

Ce monument sans prix par son antiquité,
Temoignera pour nous à la postérité
Que dans tous les dangers Cesarée eut un père,
Attentif et vaillant, généreux et prospère,
Et redira, Conway, aux siècles à venir,
Qu'en vertu du respect dû à ce souvenir,
Elle te fit ce don, acquis à ta vaillance,
Comme un juste tribut de sa reconnoissance.

LETTER CCCXVII.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 11, 1788.

I AM sorry, madam, that *Mes. Villageoises* have no better provender than my *syllogisms* to send to their correspondents, nor am I ambitious of rivalling the barber or innkeeper, and becoming the wit of five miles round. I remember how, long ago, I estimated local renown at its just value by a sort of little adventure that I will tell you; and, since that, there is an admirable chapter somewhere in Voltaire which shews that more extended fame is but local on a little larger scale; it is the chapter of the Chinese who goes into a European bookseller's shop, and is amazed at finding none of the works of his most celebrated countrymen; while the bookseller finds the stranger equally ignorant of western classics.

Well, madam, here is my tiny story: I went once with Mr. Rigby to see a window of painted glass at Messling, in Essex, and dined at a better sort of alehouse. The landlady waited on us and was notably loquacious, and entertained us with the *bons mots* and funny exploits of Mr. Charles; Mr. Charles said this,

Mr. Charles played such a trick: oh! nothing was so pleasant as Mr. Charles. But how astonished the poor soul was when we asked who Mr. Charles was; and how much more astonished when she found we had never heard of Mr. Charles Luchyn, who, it seems, is a relation of Lord Grimston, had lived in their village, and been the George Selwyn of half a dozen cottages.

If I had a grain of ambitious pride left, it is what, in other respects, has been the thread that has run through my life, that of being forgotten; so true, except the folly of being an author, has been what I said last year to the Prince of Wales when he asked me if I was a Freemason, I replied, "No, Sir; I never was anything."

A propos to the Prince; I am sorry you do not approve my offering to kiss the Duke of York's hand when he came to see my house. I never had been presented to him; but moreover, as I am very secure of never being suspected to pay my court for interest, and certainly never seek royal personages, I always pique myself, when thrown in their way, upon shewing that I know I am nobody, and know the distance between them and me: this I take to be common sense, and do not repent of my behaviour. If I were a grandee and in place, I would not, like the late Duchess of Northumberland, tag after them calling them my master and my mistress. I think, if I were their servant, I would as little, like the same Grace, parade before the Queen with more footmen than her Majesty. *That* was impertinent.

I am sorry, for the third time of this letter, that I have no new village anecdotes to send your ladyship, since they divert you for a moment. I have one but some months old. Lady Charleville, my neighbour, told me three months ago, that, having some company with her, one of them had been to see Strawberry. "Pray," said another, "who is that Mr. Walpole?" "Lord!" cried a third; "don't you know the great epicure Mr. Walpole?" "Pho!" said the first; "great epicure! you mean the antiquarian." There, madam, surely this anecdote may take its place in the chapter of local fame. If I have picked up no recent anecdotes on our common, I have made a much more, to me, precious acquisition. It is the acquaintance of two young ladies of the name of Berry, whom I first saw last winter, and who accidentally took a house here with their father for this season. Their story is singular enough to entertain you. The grandfather, a Scot, had a large estate in his own country, 5000*l.* a-year it is said; and a circumstance I shall tell you makes it probable. The eldest son married for love a woman with no fortune. The old man was enraged and would not see him. The wife died and left these two young ladies. Their grandfather wished for an heir male, and pressed the widower to remarry, but could not prevail; the son declaring he would consecrate himself to his daughters and their education. The old man did not break with him again, but, much worse, totally disinherited him and left all to his second son, who very handsomely gave up 800*l.* a-year to his elder

brother. Mr. Berry has since carried his daughters for two or three years to France and Italy, and they are returned the best informed and the most perfect creatures I ever saw at their age. They are exceedingly sensible, entirely natural and unaffected, frank, and, being qualified to talk on any subject, nothing is so easy and agreeable as their conversation—not more apposite than their answers and observations. The eldest, I discovered by chance, understands Latin and is a perfect Frenchwoman in her language. The younger draws charmingly, and has copied admirably Lady Di's gipsies, which I lent, though for the first time of her attempting colours. They are of pleasing figures; Mary, the eldest, sweet, with fine dark eyes, that are very lively when she speaks, with a symmetry of face that is the more interesting from being pale; Agnes, the younger, has an agreeable sensible countenance, hardly to be called handsome, but almost. She is less animated than Mary, but seems out of deference to her sister to speak seldomer, for they doat on each other, and Mary is always praising her sister's talents. I must even tell you they dress within the bounds of fashion, though fashionably; but without the excrescences and balconies with which modern hoydens overwhelm and barricade their persons. In short, good sense, information, simplicity, and ease, characterise the Berrys; and this is not particularly mine, who am apt to be prejudiced, but the universal voice of all who know them. The first night I met them I would not be acquainted with them, having

heard so much in their praise that I concluded they would be all pretension. The second time, in a very small company, I sat next to Mary, and found her an angel both inside and out. Now I do not know which I like best, except Mary's face, which is formed for a sentimental novel, but is ten times fitter for a fifty times better thing, genteel comedy. This delightful family comes to me almost every Sunday evening, as our region is too *proclamatory* to play at cards on the seventh day. I do not care a straw for cards, but I do disapprove of this partiality to the youngest child of the week; while the other poor six days are treated as if they had no souls to save. I forgot to tell you that Mr. Berry is a little merry man with a round face, and you would not suspect him of so much feeling and attachment. I make no excuse for such minute details; for, if your ladyship insists on hearing the humours of my district, you must for once indulge me with sending you two pearls that I found in my path.

LETTER CCCXVIII.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 19, 1788.

It stands me upon, madam, to hurry my answer, when I have to thank you for your very pretty and very flattering poetry. Little did I think that my two Straw Berries would prove muses at Farming-Woods. I sent your ladyship an account of them from

absolute dearth of subjects, when you had commanded me to write again, and when I had done so, I repented, and thought you would laugh at me in your mind's mouth, for troubling you with an idle description of two girls with whom I have happened to get acquainted. Luckily, your ladyship and our lord were, at that moment, full as much a man and woman of the woods as any marquis in Christendom; and, as you are there still, I shall venture to proceed, and send you, not an adequate return (as far as my part goes) for your verses but some of *les amusemens des eaux du Strawberri*, but beseech that they may go no farther, for trifles that *égayent* a little private society, are ridiculous, if they get abroad, especially from a septuagenary rhymer.

The Berrys were to come and see my printing-press. I recollected my gallantry of former days, and they found these stanzas ready set :—

To Mary's lips has ancient Rome
Her purest language taught,
And from the modern city-home
Agnes its pencil brought.

Rome's ancient Horace sweetly chants
Such maids with lyric fire;
Albion's old Horace sings nor paints—
He only can admire.

Still would his press their fame record,
So amiable the pair is!
But, ah! how vain to think his word
Can add a straw to Berrys!

The next morning, the Latian nymph sent me these lines:—

Had Rome's famed Horace thus addrest
His Lydia or his Lyce,
He had ne'er so oft complain'd their breast
To him was cold and icy.

But had they sought their joy to explain,
Or praise their generous bard,
Perhaps, like me, they had tried in vain,
And felt the task too hard.

I will now quit my pretty natural new acquaintance, to utter my wonder (for wonder I do at this novel *équipée*, though accustomed to so many of her vagaries) of a former poetic *connoissance*, Lady C——. One is apt to cry, on hearing any eccentric exploit, "Oh, she is mad!" but surely the packet to Blenheim, and the *two* proposals, considering all circumstances, were produced by the full of the moon. Indeed, those *coups de lune* come thick and fast. But last week, another of her projects came to my knowledge; I do not think myself at liberty to mention it yet, though it will be no secret; but you will allow, madam, that *I* have good reason not to be the first to divulge it. When you hear it, I will tell you more concerning it.

Lady Tweeddale, between fondness and enormous thrift, really did starve her children; but she is strangely foolish, and then what can one say more?

George is returned to Richmond, and diverted me prodigiously. I had foretold that he would bottle up some relict from the royal visit, but, as he has more wit than I have prophetic spirit, his label to a certain

patera of *La Reine boit* far outwent my imagination; I suppose he told it to Lord Ossory, or shewed it to him.

I have been entertained, too, by a visit of Lord Leicester to Penshurt, from Tunbridge. As the former had belonged to usurpers of his title, of which he had been wronged from the æra of the Conquest, I should not have thought he would have deigned to enter it. Oh! but he did; ay, and fell in love with, and wants to purchase it. In the mansion, he found a helmet, and put it on, but, unfortunately, it had been made for some paladin whose head was not of the exact standard that a genuine Earl of Leicester's should be, and, in doffing it, he almost tore one of his ears off. I am persuaded he tried it with the intention of wearing it at the next coronation, for, when he was but two-and-twenty, he called on me one morning, and told me he proposed to claim the championry of England, being descended from the eldest daughter of Ralph de Basset, who was champion before the flood, or before the Conquest, I forget which, whereas the Dymocks come only from the second, and he added, "I did put in my claim at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth." A gentleman who was with me, and who did not understand the heraldic tongue, hearing such a declaration from a very young man, stared, and thought he was gone raving mad, and I, who did understand him, am still not clear that the gentleman was in the wrong.

As you allow me to fill my letters with any scraps

I can amass, I will tell your ladyship how I was struck lately by a sentence of a negro. I was at Kingston, with the sisters of Lord Milford, who are my relations, and who have lately lost their very aged mother. They have a favourite black, who has lived with them a great many years, and is remarkably sensible. To amuse Lady Phillips under a long illness, they had read to her the account of the Pelew Islands. Somebody happened to say we were sending, or have just sent a ship thither; the black, who was in the room, exclaimed, "Then there is an end of their happiness!" What a satire on Europe.

A propos to scraps and fragments, madam; part of the "Memoires de St. Simon," which I have long thirsted to see, is published, but has not yet arrived here. Mrs. Damer could get but one copy at Paris, and I have only had a glimpse of one volume out of three, but, even there, I found at least two of Voltaire's most remarkable anecdotes.

The Duc de St. Simon was a favourite of the Regent, but dying, his "Memoires" were seized, and locked up at Versailles in the *depôt de papiers*. The Duc de Choiseul, *qui osoit tout*, had a copy taken, and the duchess lent it to Madame du Deffand, who made her promise I should see it at my next visit; but the Duc's fall intervened, and Madame de Grammont persuaded him it would be dangerous to let it be known then that he had a copy, and I could not blame her. Since that, the Duchesse d'Anville saw, probably, the same copy, and made extracts, as others have from

that or the original. I am not sure that the whole is public, or will be, but a good deal is something. Finis of my scraps and paper.

LETTER CCCXIX.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 3, 1788.

I CAME to town but yesterday at two o'clock, madam, when I found your ladyship's letter. I would have answered it directly, but so many persons came in, it was impossible.

You attributed my late silence, madam, to the right, at least to the chief cause: Madness is too unpleasant a subject to me who have undergone so much from it in my nephew's case. I heartily pity all afflicted with, or related to it.

It was besides, too serious a topic to handle, especially under such perfect ignorance as mine. I have not been in town but once or twice for a night or two. At Twickenham I could hear nothing but the strangest incoherent accounts. When here, the assertions were more positive, yet only more discordant; and I saw nobody whose authority I could think better than from second or third hands: and I did not choose to invalidate them more, as I should do by even repeating them and removing them still farther from a source that might not be pure.

Things now draw to a crisis, and every point will be public, worth knowing certainly, for the events will

concern everybody, and indifference would be affected at a moment so new. I, though so old, and as little interested as any individual can be, do not pretend to be incurious. Every *eighty-eight* seems to be a favourite period with fate; and when the club that had recourse to Queen Elizabeth's 88, chose to go two hundred years back for a companion to the Revolution, they little thought that if they had waited a month, they would have an era of their own to the purpose.

With such food for reflection or anticipation, one can be in no want of matter: but I am too ancient to tap what may almost be called a new reign, and of which I am not likely to see much. To penetration I never pretended; nor to say truth, much believe in, for this reason—the more intuitive any man's head, the wiser he is deemed: now a wise man only calculates from probabilities; he does not condescend (nor would be the shrewder for it) to estimate chance and follies, which decide oftener than probability does. My foresight, if I gave it the rein, would not prognosticate much felicity to the nation from so unexpected a calamity, because I should not take uncertainty for a stable of foundation, and hopes and fears do not form an horizon of tranquillity. *Interregnums* have seldom produced halcyon days; yet I no more depend on historic precedent, than I do on sagacious foresight. I do not know that there is a grain of good sense in all the labyrinth of speculation in which I could wander, except in my steady opinion of our being exceedingly

fortunate in the present embarrassed situation of France. Monsieur Necker may, for ought I know, be a dextrous financier—but he is no Richelieu—though no bad politician neither, as far as confounding goes, for the roll of questions he proposed to the notables seems to have thrown open the gates to endless controversy and disputation, and to mean to set all the provinces, all their towns, all the nobility, clergy, and people together by the ears, before they can settle who shall be *les Etats;* and thus he may convert a rebellion into a civil war, which may save the prerogative at the expense of the revenue, which one should have thought would rather have been his object to procure and settle. That is his affair—it is ours, whichever way they are embroiled. To me it is private comfort, that all the Machiavels and Machiavellesses of the present age, who have sown war, have only reaped perplexity, disgrace, and discomfiture. France *bouleversed* Holland and was foiled: Cæsar has been baffled by the Turks he despised: Semiramis has drawn Sweden and Poland on her shoulders: and Sweden is in danger at home. "*Tant mieux, tant mieux.*"

Lord Ossory, no doubt, will come, madam, and satisfy your curiosity, if you can be content to wait for the echo, which would surprise me. One always thinks, when reading of any memorable period, how one should like to have lived at the time. Surely so novel a crisis as the present is of that complexion. Even if we are temperate, it will be a singular moment. It certainly is a grave one!

LETTER CCCXX.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 26, 1788.

I MUST have been very presumptuous, madam, had I expected your ladyship to bestow on me any minutes of the very few hours you passed in town—indeed I was not so unreasonable. Your dentist, I hope, was successfully employed.

I am by no means expert, madam, at explaining obscurities. The passage you have sent me is probably incorrectly printed, if not too carelessly written. It perhaps alludes to Mahomet's first wife, Cadesha, who became a proselyte to his revelations, and propagated his gospel. She certainly bore to him none but allegoric progeny. Or may *the she wolf* mean Mahomet's own enthusiasm? I only guess because you bid me—not from ambition of making sense out of what I do not understand.

I have been confined to my house for some days by the worst cold and cough I ever had in my days. I treat it as ill as possible, and do not give it a morsel; still it will not leave me. In revenge it will not let me speak. My whole amusement, a woful one, has been dipping into three volumes of the King of Prussia's letters to Voltaire. Worse stuff did I never behold! so pedantic, so tiresomely flattering, so utterly void of variety, with Apollon, Milton, and Newton in every page, and such bushels of vile verses—oh! I borrowed and shall return them. It is to be hoped his memoirs

will make amends—but General Conway is reading them himself, and could only lend me the correspondence.

Lord Beauchamp has just called on me, and says the King of Spain is dead.—I should be as glad to read his letters as those of his "*Soi-disant Philosophe de Sans Souci.*" What contradictions are we, great mortals and little! To be the rival of Alexander, and the *singe* of the Marquis d' Argens and French academicians!

I will not plead my cold for the shortness of this, madam, yet I assure you it makes it troublesome even to write—but I really know nothing more than I have told you, not even of politics (which you choose to avoid), and which I never seek, and a dispute full as little on any subject. Politics are to me but objects of entertainment in their turn, like other transient occurrences—but serious follies if they affect the good humour of the person no ways concerned in them. It would be droll indeed if your ladyship and I should grow warm about them.

LETTER CCCXXI.

Berkeley Square, Feb, 6, 1789.

I AM sure, madam, the various reasons of my silence will appear valid to you. For six weeks I was confined by the worst cold and cough that I ever had in my life, and so shattered and oppressed, that I suspected the latter at least would fix for its life and

mine, like an owl that resides and hoots in an old ruin—but it is gone. Then came the misfortune of Miss Campbell's death, and I was shut up with Mr. Conway and Lady Ailesbury. He bore it the worst of the two at first, but has conquered himself; and she is better within these two days.

For news I heard not a tittle but political, and Œdipus himself could not have guessed what was true. Every body that called on me, asserted something or other on *the best authority*, and every other body that came, contradicted his predecessor as positively on as good authority; and so between two stools my faith remained just where it was. Thus I could not report any thing that was *party* per pale, truth and falsehood, when I could not blazon either in its true colours—were all these embargos not sufficient? would not you yourself, madam, impose silence on any body that had a grain of modesty left, when you tell me you have been reading old letters of mine to your daughters and niece? But alas! it is too late to blush through so many wrinkles! nay, this very hour inflicts threefold penance on me! viz., what you have said; Bell's republication; and Lady Craven's travels, where I make one of the figurants. In truth and in very sober truth I constantly lament having been born with a propensity to writing, and still worse to publishing! how many monuments of my folly will survive me! one comfort is, that half the world seems to be as foolish as I have been, and eyes will not be born in plenty enough to read a thousandth part of what each

year produces: *Nos numeri sumus*, and *I* shall be no more distinguished than my spare form would be in a living multitude.

For "Bell's Edition," I only am sorry for it as a republication; my epistle is the worst poem in the volume, so I cannot complain of my company. I had no business to write verses, for I was not born a poet, whatever my propensities were; but Bell is a rascal, who at least this way will get nothing by me. He cheated me literally of above 500*l.* on my last volume of the "Anecdotes of Painting," and now sets me at defiance because he found I would not arrest him.

"Lady Craven's Travels" I received from Robson two hours ago. Dodsley brought the MS. to me before I came to town, but I positively refused to open it, though he told me my name was mentioned in it several times; but I was conscious how grievous it would be to her family and poor daughters, and therefore persisted in having nothing to do with it. I own I have now impatiently cut the leaves in search of my own name, and am delighted on finding it there but thrice, and only by the initial letter. When I have the honour of seeing your ladyship, I can tell you many collateral circumstances; but I will not put them on paper. I fear she may come to wish, or should, that *she* had not been born with a propensity to writing.

These questions I have answered readily, madam: but about Calonne and La Motte I know nothing. *They* are a species of outlaws for which I have no taste, nor for their compeeress Madlle D'eon.

I can as little satisfy your ladyship about the title of Mr. Hayley's fourth play, which I totally forget. I remember the scene lay at Gibraltar, and that the subject was if possible more disgusting than that of the "Mysterious Mother;" and having no self-love for the deformed offspring of other people, I never opened the volume a second time.

Mr. Fox, I am told, is better, but I have seen nobody that is particularly informed; though my house is well situated as a coffee-house, and I very seldom stir from the bar in a morning, I have no intelligence but from those who accidentally drop in, consequently my gazette is commonly striped of two colours, as opposite as black and white, and, if repeated, would sound like the *cross-readings* from newspapers. Truth is said to lie at the bottom of a well, to which I am sure at present there are two buckets, which clash so much, that each brings up as much mud as pure grain. If I do not sift them, at least I do not retail one for the other.

LETTER CCCXXII.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 10, 1789.

A TRUCE, my good lady, with my perfections! indeed I have none, and when you compliment me with any praises, you only make me cry, "Lord, have mercy, can this mean *me!*" If you provoke me, I will write such a just satire on myself, that you shall be ashamed of ever saying a civil thing to me again. Nay, how the

deuce should I know myself, when you tell me of my candour; I, who have ever allowed that I am the most prejudiced of mankind! But do not mistake, madam; it is not being candid, to have lived to be grown indifferent, which is the best chance that common sense has for obtaining the casting vote in one's own privy council. I must again, too, remonstrate against your shewing my letters; ay, for your own sake, if you desire they should be natural, and unreserved. Is it possible to be unaffected, when one knows one is to undergo an ordeal of eyes? Whatever interferes with one's writing, as if *tête-à-tête* with one's correspondent, must destroy the ease of letters; and who will dare to write any uppermost folly in the face of half-a-dozen inquisitors! Your ladyship is used to, and has tolerated my fooleries, and to encourage me to continue them, you tell me Lord Holland loves nonsense; but ah! madam, the nonsense of one age is not the nonsense of another age! I remember the late Lord Leicester, who had formed a *galimatias* that was much to the taste of his contemporaries. He retired to Holkham for a few years, returned to town and to White's; a new generation was come forth, who stared and concluded he was superannuated; and he was forced to pack up his obsolete phrases and antiquated humour and decamp again, to rail at the dulness of the young men. Even wit has its modes on which its success depends, as Sir W. Temple observes of the old Earl of Norwich; and who knows but Lord Brudenel may cease to be laughed at in a future reign! Diogenes Laertius records many witti-

cisms of the old philosophers, which would not raise a smile now in the House of Commons, where our country-gentlemen are no niggards of horse laughs at miserable jokes. If, therefore, you hold out readers to me, it will be such a *terrorem*, that I shall grow as stiff and formal as her grace my neighbour Beaufort; begin *with hoping you are well*, and conclude with *compliments to your fireside and all friends*, and tell you as news the prices of commodities at Bearkey.

If you had not so dosed me, madam, with high-flown panegyric, I doubt I should have been flattered by Lord Holland's approbation; but now I dare not listen to the charmer, charm he ever so wisely; nay, I am almost afraid of commending his very pretty easy verses, lest I should seem to connive at a mart of flattery. I have one set of royal and noble authors left, which shall be at his lordship's command when you tell me whither to direct them.

I am a little surprised, I confess, at your ladyship's finding it laborious to finish Mr. Gibbon, especially the last volume, which I own, too, delighted me the most —perhaps because I was best acquainted with the subjects of it. In the other volumes I was a little confounded by his leaping backwards and forwards, and I could not recollect all those *fainéant* emperors of Constantinople, who come again and again, like the same ships in a moving picture. How he could traverse such acres of ill-written histories, even to collect such a great work, astonishes me. I am reading as multifarious a collection, but by no means with the same

alacrity, the "Anacharsis" of the Abbé Barthelemy, four most corpulent quartos, into which he has amassed, and indeed very ingeniously arranged, every passage I believe (for aught I know) that is extant in any Greek or Latin author, which gives any account of Greece and all and every part of it; but, alas! I have not yet waded through the second volume, a sure sign that the appetite of my eyes is decayed. I can read now but for amusement. It is not at all necessary to improve oneself for the next world, especially as one's knowledge will probably not prove standard there. The Abbé is besides a little too partial to the Grecian accounts of their own virtues; and as M. Pauw and Dr. Gillies have lately unhinged their scale of merits, a rehabilitation is no business of mine.

I must not finish without thanking your ladyship for sending me *Les amusemens des eaux d'Ampthill:* I could return nothing but accounts of political hostilities, in which I hear our Amazons take a very considerable part. Lady Craven, I believe, will scarce make the impression that might be expected from so rash a publication, as she has not a word on the present crisis.

P.S. I am dull, and cannot guess the charades.

LETTER CCCXXIII.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 24, 1789.

THE character that has been given to you of the abbé's book is very just, and it is extremely well

described by *a Mosaic composed all of bits of truth;* but alas! the pavement is a fiction, and not slippery enough to make me slide over it: it is, as Mrs. Damer says, a vision, a dream about truths; in short, it is, an excellent work for a man of twenty-five, just fresh from the classics, and would range them most compendiously in his head, and he would know where to find any parcel he should want on occasion; but for me, I have not been able to wade to the end of the second volume. I cannot gulp again the reveries of the old philosophers on the origin of the world, and still less the foolish romances of Herodotus, such as that of the patriotic courtier who cut off his own nose and ears in order to betray Babylon to Darius. *Iron tears may fall down Pluto's cheek* when he sees Nebuchadnezzar come to himself; yet even that I should not believe at the distance of two thousand years! Then, having just read Dr. Gillies and Mr. Pauw, I cannot for the life of me admire the Lacedemonians again, nor listen gravely to the legend of Lycurgus, when Mr. Pauw has proved it very doubtful whether any such personage existed; if there did, he only refined savages into greater barbarism. I will tell your ladyship an additional observation that I made just as I broke off with "Anacharsis." We are told that Lycurgus allowed theft and enjoined community of goods. I beg to know where was the use of stealing where there was no individual property? Does stealth consist in filching what is your own as much as any other man's? It would be like Mr. Cumberland, who steals from himself.

Wednesday.

I had written thus far yesterday morning in answer to a scrap that I had just received from your ladyship with the query about "Anacharsis," and then I had visits till three, and then I was obliged to dress and go and leave my name for the houses of Edgcumbe and Hobart on their union. When I came home to dinner, I found your longer letter, which had been outstripped by its postscript, and it was then too late to save the post without burning my mouth from haste, for I am so antiquated as still to dine at four when I can, though frequently prevented, as many are so good as to call on me at that hour, because it is too soon for them to go home and dress so early in the morning.

I did not intend to say a syllable on the King's recovery, as I have nothing but the crumbs which I pick up from those who go every morning to receive their daily faith from the Lord of the bedchamber at St. James's. I am still less qualified to answer, when you ask me where is Truth? I reply, how should I know it, even if I could tell where it is? when Pilate asked what it was, I do not find that he was informed. Dr. Beattie may know better, perhaps.

Whatever be the King's case, he is to be pitied—yes, whether he is to be produced, conscious of what has been his situation, or capable of business, yet to be told he must not risk engaging in it, or whether he is to be precipitated back, by undertaking it. Nor is the nation quite undeserving compassion, if it is to be subjected to the freaks of a head that has lost its poize,

or to those who insist on reigning for him. With such gleams or phantoms of foresight, I cannot much dissent from your ladyship's apprehension of storms: yet I will hope we shall realize no old prophecies. What the one you refer to was, I do not at all recollect; but it sounds something like *Nixon's*, an old Cheshire prediction, that I have lived to see revived and stillborn again two or three times, as often as the Jacobites were meditating or reviving rebellion. I heard it first when I was at school, and it frightened me terribly. We were to swim in blood up to our chins in the time of George the son of George; which circumstance looked exceedingly probable; and does again with equal or no more probability. A miller with two thumbs (a wonderfully striking phenomenon, though I do not remember its being specified that both were to be on the same hand, though one devoutly concluded so) was to set all to rights again, and such a marvellous miller was said to exist—but enough of these fooleries. If the cloud bursts, it is most likely to fall on the west, whence the viceroy has refused to send over the votes of both houses, offering the regency to the prince—and yesterday there was a rumour of his vice-majesty's being impeached there—which I do not warrant. Nay, I do not know what the English senate is doing, or putting off to-day.

I am sorry my noble authoress's travels do not please you, madam; in truth, I fear they will add more to her present celebrity than to her future renown. I even doubt whether she would not have been turned into a

laurel as soon by running *from* Apollo (which was not her turn), as by running *to* him. You have expressed most happily the greater facility of whiffing gales than of gathering flowers. A box of sumach from Ampthill will be as precious to me as if it came from Serendip.

Of Mirabeau's book I have heard of nobody that has got a copy here yet, but the Dutch minister, and he, the first volume only. The papers to-day say it has been burnt at Paris, which will make it—

> "On wings of flames come flying all abroad."

The Duke of York, I am told, is not gently treated in it.

There is another *just* or *unjust* volume that makes its appearance, not composed of milk and honey: the object Bishop Hurd; the author Dr. Parr. The vehicle, like his "Bellendenus," an old carriage on new wheels. The title, "Tracts by a Warburtonian." It is desperately well written; but probably not of the amusing kind to your ladyship.

I would not interrupt my news, or rather, my replies, and therefore delayed telling you that Tonton is dead, and that I comfort myself: he was grown stone deaf, and very nearly equally blind, and so weak that, the two last days, he could not walk upstairs. Happily, he had not suffered, and died close by my side without a pang or a groan. I have had the satisfaction, for my dear old friend's sake and his own, of having nursed him up, by constant attention, to the age of sixteen, yet always afraid of his surviving me, as it

was scarce possible he could meet a third person who would study his happiness equally. I sent him to Strawberry, and went thither on Sunday to see him buried behind the chapel, near Rosette. I shall miss him greatly, and must not have another dog; I am too old, and should only breed it up to be unhappy, when I am gone. My resource is in two marble kittens that Mrs. Damer has given me, of her own work, and which are so much alive that I talk to them, as I did to poor Tonton! if this is being superannuated, no matter; when dotage can amuse itself, it ceases to be an evil. I fear, my marble playfellows are better adapted to me, than I am to being your ladyship's correspondent.

P. S. As you wrote on both ends of your cover, I had missed till this moment on putting up your letter, the very kind things you say on Mr. Conway and Lady Ailesbury, which I take as a great obligation to myself too. He has conquered his concern when nothing happens to strike on it particularly; but Lady A. is not well, and has not yielded to go anywhere but to Mrs. Damer and her brother Lord Frederic; but she sees particular persons at home; and if her health mends, I hope will recover her spirits too—I wish I were as sanguine about my niece, Lady Dysart, who, I fear, is in a decay.

N.B. The nation, like a *paroli* at Faro, is gone to sleep for another week; and as the ministers have *set on the king*, they will probably win.

LETTER CCCXXIV.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 28, 1789.

You have overwhelmed me with confusion, madam. I was aware of frequently sending you a sheet full of nonsense, and I did know, too, that your ladyship kept my letters; and it was the conscience of the latter that made me more ready to continue the former, as I trusted that a multiplicity of follies would provoke yourself or somebody else to throw them all into the fire; but I own I did not suspect that in so few years they would become totally unintelligible, even to myself. The letter you have sent me is so far from unravelling what you alluded to, that I have not the smallest recollection of the story, nor of what it referred to. I return it, not as a preservative, but trusting that whoever finds it will conclude that the writer of it, and I fear of many more such rhapsodies, was lightheaded; and if you have patience to read such letters over again, *Ora pro nobis*, for both of us, madam!

However, having at present a lucid interval, like my betters, and naturally not loving a dispute, I shall agree to all your ladyship's creeds in waiting. I will believe that Cheltenham water, which is the most violent of all lotions, and stronger than Madeira and Champagne, which so many heads can bear with impunity, may derange the intellects for four months, though it has never overset for four-and-twenty hours the brains of so many thousands as have drunk it for at least these hundred

years. I will believe that your ladyship believes that you admire Mr. Pitt on all occasions, which is not extraordinary, as you are so apt always to think favourably of great politicians; and above all things, I rejoice on the comfort you find in having your husband on one side, and your two sons on the other, which must harmonize your mind; and methinks you might extend that satisfaction still farther. I cannot see the least reason why his Majesty should relapse, even if he should return to Cheltenham next summer, as he told Sir Joseph Banks last Saturday (since his recovery) he intends. I have even more faith in perfect recoveries than his Majesty has, who has often declared he doubted of my nephew's. Bless me, has not my nephew recovered perfectly *twice!* and the last time of his coming to that perfection, did not he, in a week after Dr. Monro had pronounced him sane, give the strongest proof of sound intellects, by marching to Norwich at the head of the Norfolk militia (which the King had commanded me to prevent, and which I could not), and write in the orderly book there, that if the French should land on any part of the coast, the magistrates were to burn the suburbs of that city, which would then be impregnable.

You see, madam, how accommodating my faith is! It requires still less exertion to fit it to the prognostics in your last. I did then foresee some hurlyburly; and the Marquis of Buckingham seems to have opened a serious sluice; and should he be supported in the imperative mood that was *so judiciously* adopted at the commencement of the American troubles, I should

not be surprised if the Irish were to weigh anchor and sail into the Atlantic ocean of independence after the Colonists; and then the son, like his father George Grenville, would have the honour of losing another sovereignty; or like the sage Duc d'Olivares might congratulate his master on a rebellion, which would give him an opportunity of enslaving his own subjects. If all this should happen, pray advertise me in time, madam, that I may *always admire* the Marquis of Buckingham too.

As you have made me ashamed of my foolish letters, I will add no more to this, but a heap of thanks for the portrait du Prince Allemand; for your kind enquiries about Lady Dysart, who has and deserves her character and my full affection, and who, though much better for this last week, I fear is in a declining state; and for the obliging offer of another dog—but against that I most positively protest. My life is too far wasted and too precarious to embark in any new care. I have such a passion for dogs, that a favourite one is a greater misery than pleasure, and to give me one is to sow me with anxiety. I would as soon adopt Mlle. Fagnani.

LETTER CCCXXV.

Monday evening.

THE coach did not deliver your ladyship's obliging note till four o'clock this afternoon, when the post had been gone out three hours, so I could only thank you

by to-morrow morning's coach, or you would be set out for Ampthill.

I did, I own, hurt myself pretty much, madam, but it was a mere muscular bruise. I sent for the apothecary as soon as you were gone, but with my gout*icity* he would not venture to bleed me. He recommended frequent repetitions of arquebusade, which have certainly alleviated the pain, though he thinks it will continue for a few days. As I did not break a rib, I have only lost the two * that are gone to Yorkshire.—Your ladyship's most obliged humble servant.

LETTER CCCXXVI.

Strawberry Hill, July 1, 1789.

My fall, madam, did not deserve the kind attention your ladyship has paid to it. By bathing my side with arquebusade and camphire till I smelt like a gin-shop, even the blackness is gone, and I have no pain now but in my hay, which has been sopping these twelve days. I am determined never to cut my grass again till October, the only month whose honour one can trust: June always ruins one in hay and coals: I crouch every evening over the fire.

Madam, I know how to feel for you on the imminent danger you are in from the princely visit to Woburn. One great cause of my loyalty and legality is a wish that the King may never die, lest, on a demise

* The Misses Berry.—Ed.

of the crown, Hampton Court should become the seat of empire, and Strawberry Hill consequently grow within the purlieus of the Court, which would be a still worse grievance than the crowds that come to see my house.

In what a combustion is France! I understand nothing I hear or read. Necker dismissed and recalled by the people! I concluded that *he* had sown the seeds of division in the States, in hopes of an excuse for dissolving them after rashly recommending them. Famine threatens them, too; an Englishman who came back a few days ago could not for any sum purchase a morsel of white bread at Calais. *We* have horse-room and cart-room for being as mad as we please. Loutherbourg, the painter, is turned an inspired physician, and has three thousand patients. His sovereign panacea is barley-water. I believe it as efficacious as mesmerism. Baron Swedenborg's disciples multiply also—I am glad of it; the more religions and the more follies the better: they inveigle proselytes from one another. I used to be afraid of the hosts of methodists, but mother-church is safe if there is plenty of heresiarchs, and physicians pretend to a vocation too. You see, madam, whatever you may have thought, that I am a good subject and a good Church-of-England-man. The fact is, all reformations are experiments, and *le jeu* seldom *vaut les chandelles*. If one could cure the world of being foolish, *à la bonne heure;* but to cure it of one folly is only making room for another. If Luther could have foreseen the

bloodshed he should occasion, must he not have shuddered? He must have been better assured of his mission than I believe he was, if he thought that to save any million of souls he had a right to venture the many hundred thousands of lives that were massacred in consequence of his doctrines.

You did not probably expect, madam, that, in answer to a howd'ye, I should talk to you about Luther; but I could not send a mere card of thanks in return, and let my pen make up something like a letter as it could. Nothing had happened within my beat, but the arrival of Mrs. Jordan at the theatre at Richmond, which has raised its character exceedingly: our Jews and Gentiles throng it. I have not been there, for, though I think her perfect in her walk, I cannot sit through a whole play ill performed to see her play, however excellently, in such wretched farces as "The Romp," in which I have seen her. The weather, indeed, tolerates all winter diversions; but then it is too cold to come back between two and three miles in the rain. The cuckoos, I believe, are still staying in town, for I have heard but one since I came to Twickenham. Surely it was some traveller that first propagated the idea of summer, which never ripens here more than grapes, unless in a *hot-house*. It struck me thirty years ago that this is the most beautiful country when framed and glazed, that is, when you look through a window with a good fire behind you.

Pray, madam, send me an account of *les amusemens des eaux de Woburn*, or rather, I suppose, *des Vins*.

How ancient Gertrude will regret not being there! *She* would shew the brood mares to the young fillies, though you will not.

LETTER CCCXXVII.

Strawberry Hill, July 16, 1789.

As my own exchequer is empty, madam, I chose to wait before I replied to your last, till I could offer you something of another's coin. The inclosed copy of verses pleased me so much, that, though not intended for publication, I prevailed on the authoress, Miss Hannah More, to allow me to take off a small number. Though I am an old printer retired from business, one cannot help now and then rubbing up one's old calling to oblige a friend, and as your ladyship used to deal at my shop, I thought it my duty to present you with this small tribute in acknowledgment of former favours, and hope you will receive it favourably from your ancient tradesman. Perhaps you will smile at a printer talking of his exchequer; but as all orders entrench on the style of those above them, while the highest ranks sink so low that the King of France is a bankrupt, I do not think it too assuming for an old printer to talk of his till being at as low ebb as a royal treasury.

It is a very truth that I have nothing to say. The civil war in France does not proceed half fast enough to supply correspondence; and our own halcyon days

are most unfruitful of events. Lord and Lady Waldegrave have been with me for two days, and are going to Scarborough : we had nothing but rain to talk on and lament the whole time. "Bonner's Ghost" must therefore supply the place of a letter, and I wish I could often make such amends : your ladyship would be a prodigious gainer, and so should I too : it would be worth my while to keep shop in earnest, if I could often have such wares to vend. I do think I have some merit with that tiny commonwealth, that proudly calls itself the republic of letters (and which, like Cromwell's House of Lords, is often composed of the dregs of the earth) for having, sometimes almost by force, obtained for the public works of intrinsic value or rarity. I shall sit mighty low on the bench of authors ; but Kirgate and I shall not give place to many printers in the offices of the Temple of Fame.

18th.

I have been disappointed of the completion of "Bonner's Ghost," by my rolling press being out of order, and was forced to send the whole impression to town to have the copper-plate taken off. In the meantime, the civil war in France, I find, has taken gigantic steps, and is grown out of all proportion to the size of a letter; besides, I know nothing authentic, nor can learn truth here. How strange it is to me to have lived to see what I have seen ! sights that the most microscopic eye of penetration could not have discovered in embryo ! America lost and settled in a republic, the Jesuits annihilated and convents abo-

lished by the House of Austria, all France enthusiastic for liberty! and in how few years since despotism had been established there! But I look on the present revolution in that country as a temporary paroxysm that will not last; and I grieve for the calamities which such violent transitions will inflict!—but I will not pretend to foretell, having nothing of the prophet but ignorance, without the inspiration.

At night.

Kirgate has brought the whole impression, and I shall have the pleasure of sending your ladyship this with a "Bonner's Ghost" to-morrow morning. I shall carry the quota that Miss More has destined to the Bishop of London to him on Monday morning, and shall sit in Bonner's chair.

LETTER CCCXXVIII.

Strawberry Hill, July 22, 1789.

My letter on Sunday passed your ladyship's in the very town of Twickenham, and, I fear, without making a bow to it; however, it will make my apology for not answering incontinently your *quære* on the identity of parts of "La Galérie de l'Ancienne Cour," and "Les Mémoires de St. Simon," which struck me too. The case, I believe, was, that the Duc de Choiseul, while minister, had a copy of the latter made, which I was promised by the *duchesse* I should read; but his fall intervened, and the Duchesse de Grammont, his

sister (which I could not blame), advised him not to let me have it then, as his having ordered a transcript for himself had been a pretty bold act, the MS. having been seized and deposited with the state papers. On the cessation of the persecution of Choiseul, he used to lend the transcript to persons who visited him at Chanteloup, and some of them, I have been told, made extracts, which strayed into the book your ladyship mentions.

How the Dukes, either of St. Simon or Choiseul, would stare at the present "Galerie de la Cour," and the precipitate fall of the Bourbons! I have not at all digested my surprise; but being very uncertain whether a quarter of what I have heard here is true, I will not make reflections blindfold, but will obey my old maxim, *wait for the echo;* and as I conclude all France is gone mad at once, because I know not how to believe that a whole nation is come to its senses at once (which is far more unprecedented), I propose to wait for a reduplication of echoes; and if I do not live to hear the last, I shall not less expect that it will vary from the present reverberation. Amongst other questions which I am going to answer, you are pleased to kindly ask, madam, how the late deluges, to which there is a codicil at this moment, have agreed with me. Thank you, astonishingly well; I am better in health than I have been these three years, and my sleep, *my* weather-glass, is but sounder and longer for going to bed half an hour sooner than I used to do. Accordingly, seventy-two is very grateful to the gout.

I did not see the verses in the "Morning Herald:" they are an excellent parody, and I fancy I guess the parodist.

I return the letter with many thanks, too, and am grateful to the gout, for, as it has preserved all my teeth, though I am so old, I am in no danger, like Mr. Layton, of being made secretary of state, were it even as common in this country to choose great officers for having lost their teeth, as for not having cut them. If Mr. Layton is already disgraced, I suppose his Imperial Majesty of Morocco repents, like his brother Louis, of having employed a Protestant as his minister, who, perhaps, had advised him to call an assembly of *les Etats à la façon de Barbarie Françoise.* I am shocked at the African cruelties exercised at Paris! but sudden and novel power is apt to be as tyrannous as the veteran, and more too; and nations may take violent prejudices for and against their kings, and alternately, without any cause obvious to the eye of a bystander.

I have certainly seen the most unfortunate of all mothers upon earth, as soon as I could: it was not a moment to neglect one for whom I have so much regard. The blow was very near killing her. She is but lately come to Twickenham, and looks as deplorably as you may imagine, madam. Where the wretched pair are, I know not. The wife, whose patience and conduct have proved her a prodigy of discretion, is gone to her father, and has a jointure of 800*l.* a-year. Dreadful as her case is, still she is the least to be pitied, for time may assuage her grief;

and the esteem of the world will reward her innocence: but there being no resource for the guilty pair, their miseries can only increase; and, consequently, the mother must always suffer for what they have brought on themselves, and to which she can never be insensible.

I have answered your ladyship's interrogatories as fully as I could, and will take my leave; hoping you admire "Bonner's Ghost," which will not lose any of its beauties, even if you read it often.

LETTER CCCXXIX.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 4, 1789.

I HAVE had my house so filled lately by detachments of my family, that I had not a moment's time to answer your ladyship's last.

For myself, I can say that I am not glad, in your ladyship's sense of the words, that *Monsieur de la Fayette governs France instead of their King;* nor do my principles lead me at all to approve of government violently wrenched, or violently exercised by anybody; nor do I believe that Monsieur de la Fayette's government will be lasting. I still less like liberty displayed by massacre, and without legal trials; and abhor the savage barbarity that the French have always shewn on all commotions. The factions in the reign of Charles VI., the St. Bartelemi, and the Ligue,

were all ferociously cruel; and their bearing the heads of those they have now murdered, in triumph, is of a piece with their tearing the heart of the Maréchal d'Ancre with their teeth.

The *Etats Généraux* are, in my opinion, the most culpable. The King had restored their old constitution, which all France had so idolized; and he was ready to amend that constitution. But the *Etats*, with no sense, prudence, or temper, and who might have obtained a good government, and perhaps permanently, set out with such violence to overturn the whole frame, without its being possible to replace it at once with a sound model entirely new, and the reverse of every law and custom of their whole country,—have deposed not only their King, but, I should think, their own authority; for they are certainly now trembling before the populace, and have let loose havoc through every province, which sooner or later will end in worse despotism than that they have demolished. Weak their late monarch is, I have no doubt, and irresolute; but I cannot look on a king, who offers to soften and meliorate a constitution, as deserving to be compared with those princes, who have encroached on the liberties of their people.

Give me leave to conclude this chapter, madam, with observing, that acute as you intended your present of Monsieur de la Fayette to me for my hero, I presume to think my principles as sound and as free from prejudice, faction, and personality as those of persons who, from pique to some, or partiality to

others, applaud or condemn, wholesale, whatever can be wire-drawn into a kind of parallel.

It is out of respect that I have presumed to defend myself, madam, against your sarcasm on Lord Ossory and myself. When ladies are politicians, and love to attack, like the unfortunate Camilla in Virgil, it is irreverent not to skirmish with them a little. Lord Ossory, like an ill-bred husband, is not so attentive, but in silence, lets you ascribe to him what bad notions you please; but he is so temperate and reasonable, that I am persuaded his sentiments on French politics are not very different from mine.

In one point I perfectly agree with your ladyship: every morning when I wake, and France rushes on my mind, I think I have been dreaming; nor can I at once conceive so total an inversion of a whole nation's character. Perhaps it is but a bloody fashion, momentary, like their other modes; and when they have deposed their monarch, or worse, and committed ten thousand outrages, they will rebound to loyalty, and out of penitence, confer on whoever shall be their king, unbounded power of punishing their excesses.

I did see, and wondered, madam, at the republication of the long-forgotten verses on the three Vernons,* printed so inaccurately, that I conclude somebody wrote them down by memory; for both sense or metre is destroyed in two or three places. Now, of such idle trifles, the greatest merit is to be correct; but every author, however averse to pretensions, exposes himself

* The Three Graces before mentioned.—Ed.

to being exhibited in still worse colours than he deserves; which is one of the many reasons that makes me regret having been of the calling.

General Fitzwilliam is dead, after a dreadful series of sufferings. He is worth 100,000*l.*; 500*l.* a year he leaves to his nephew the viscount; 500*l.* a-piece to Lord Dover, Lord Frederic Cavendish, Gen: Conway, and the two Dorrels, gentlemen of Richmond, his neighbours: near 300*l.* a year to his late wife's woman, a very meritorious servant. All the rest as residuary legatee, to his own gentleman, who had no less merit—yet 45,000*l.*, the lowest computation of the bequest, is a prodigious recompense. My neighbour Lady Charleville, very rich, too, has left a more palatable will, and left various legacies and annuities, the latter all to centre in her heir-at-law; but I scarce know the legatees even by name. Mrs. Greville is dead, too, in this district, who, I believe, had little to leave; I do not know whether even any poetry.

P.S.—I forgot in my last to mention an observation that struck me on reading the excellent parody on some lines of Pope which your ladyship sent me. It was, that in the original *chiefs out of war* is not English, nor would be intelligible without the conclusion of the line, *statesmen out of place*, which tells one that he meant *chiefs out of employment.*

LETTER CCCXXX.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 14, 1789.

THOUGH I know your ladyship and Lord Ossory were prepared and expected the misfortune which the papers tell me has happened, I cannot help expressing the part I take in your loss of so very amiable and deserving a person as Lady Lansdowne. I am even more sensible to it, as I dread a similar misfortune in one, I may venture to say of as excellent qualities and disposition, my niece, Lady Dysart, whose case flattered us a little in the spring; but she has lately grown so much worse again, that I fear her duration will be short.

I say no more, for time only, not words, can soften such afflictions, nor can any consolations be suggested, that do not more immediately occur to the persons afflicted. To moralize can comfort those only who do not want to be comforted.

LETTER CCCXXXI.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 23, 1789.

I HAVE not been able to obey your ladyship in trying to amuse Lord Ossory. I have seen, heard, or know nothing entertaining. From my own windows I see the tall avenues and chimneys of Ham House, where my poor niece lies languishing and dying. She

still is carried to air, and said to me two days ago, "I am not afraid now of crossing Kingston Bridge (which is very ruinous) I am too far gone myself!" This is not a theme to enliven anybody, and I will drop it.

Joyous I know nothing, but the prosperity of the harvest, which is favourable, indeed, and will ease the poor. Comparison, too, must make us happy, when such desolation has spread over the Continent. If we have the sense to preserve our tranquillity, what a moment for us! In the midst of the horrors one reads from France I could but smile at one paragraph. An Abbé de Sieyes excuses himself to the *Etats* from accepting the post of speaker, as he is *busy in forming a Bill of Rights and a new Constitution.* One would think he was writing a prologue to a new play! We have one monster who is groaning to create as much anarchy, that he too, I suppose, may form a new constitution! There has been in the papers a pathetic lamentation that Lord George Gordon is still in durance! So are the tigers and hyæna in the Tower, and I hope his lordship will not find bail before they do!

Richmond is in the first request this summer. Mrs. Bouverie is settled there with a large court. The Sheridans are there, too, and the Bunburys. I have been once with the first; with the others I am not acquainted. I go once or twice a week to George Selwyn late in the evening, when he comes in from walking, about as often to Mrs. Ellis here, and to Lady Cecilia at Hampton; but all together cannot contribute to an

entertaining letter, and it is odd to say that though my house is all the morning full of company, nobody lives so much alone. I have already this season had between seventy and fourscore companies to see my house; and half my time passes in writing tickets or excuses. I wish I could think as an old sexton did at King's College. One of the fellows told him he must get a great deal of money by shewing it: "Oh, no! master," replied he, "everybody has seen it now." *My* companies, it seems, are more prolific, and every set begets one or two more.

These are miserable scraps to send you, madam; but I have no better, and cannot spin out of myself. I had rather be insipid, too, than fancy I can amuse when I have really nothing to say. Lord Ossory knows my zeal, and how glad I should be to divert him if I could.

LETTER CCCXXXII.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 13, 1789.

LADY DYSART, indeed, madam, was an excellent person, and I have reason to lament her, and thank your ladyship much for your condolence. I had long known her doom was certain. She was convinced of it herself, was impatient for it, though calm and resigned to the last. Her lord is much more afflicted than I thought him capable of being; but the person who felt it most deeply is the Duchess of Gloucester. They had been dear friends from their infancy. Both

she and Mrs. Keppel sat by the corpse the next morning for two hours, for which I was very sorry; but I will not tire your ladyship with family stories, though I have nothing else to tell you, having scarce seen anybody lately but my relations.

I am very glad you are out of pain about Lady Ravensworth. I hope she will be preserved as long as Lady Albemarle, who, at eighty-six, has recovered of a thrush, and has her senses and spirits as well as ever. I seem to have some grains of immortality too, for the night before last, going into a stone-hall at Hampton Court, a very low step, that I did not perceive in the dusk, tripped me up, and gave me a worse fall than I had when your ladyship did me the honour of dining here this summer. I fell headlong at once on the stones, and against the leg of a table, bruised one of my fingers, both knees and an elbow, and battered my hip so much that it has a patch as large as the crown of a hat, and as black; but there again my featherhood saved me, and I did not break one of my straw-bones. You see, madam, to what your old gazetteer is dwindled, when he has nothing but his own mishaps to relate! You might as well correspond with the apothecary of an almshouse; however, I was not overturned with a young prince coming from races, like that stripling Lord Clermont. *The world,* notwithstanding my unbudging quietness, has sent me, I am told, on a party of pleasure to Coomb Bank, and furnished me with fifty qualifications and graces that never accompanied me in my best days. I had flat-

tered myself, that to do nothing was the best nostrum for having nothing said of one; but I see anybody may be taxed to contribute a paragraph. Mercy on us! what idle folk there must be, when it is necessary to feed them with such daily bread! Surely no other age ever lived on such insipid fare! Tout horses as they were, how the Houyhnhnms would have stared if they had been told, that in a certain country there were Daily Courants to inform the public of what every old strulbrug was *not* doing. Pope's Memoirs of P. P., or the Importance of a Man to himself, is moderate in comparison of the importance of nobody to everybody.

Is not this the season for Farming-Woods, madam? I wish Lord Ossory great sport! The despotic mob at Paris, as the rule of contraries is the first law of a revolution, have made such a massacre of game *à la ronde*, that pheasants are sold at a penny a-piece. I doubt, from the present turbulence of France, you will have no "Mémoires de St. Simon," nor "Lettres de la Duchesse d'Orleans" to carry in the chaise with you.

A propos, here is a paragraph verbatim that I found t'other day in the first volume, p. 260, in an old publication of the Abbé Raynal, called "Anecdotes Historiques, Militaires, et Politiques de l'Europe depuis l'Elévation de Charles Quint, &c., jusqu'au Traité d'Aix la Chapelle en 1748," published in 1753.

"Le Dauphin paroissoit né pour gouverner agréablement une monarchie paisible. Le Duc d'Orleans avait

tout ce qu'il falloit pour la troubler, y allumer des guerres civiles, et y causer peut-être des Revolutions."

This after-birth of a miscarriage, for that Duke of Orleans, the younger son of Francis I., died without doing any thing, has revived in the person of a prophecy.—Adieu, Madam.

LETTER CCCXXXIII.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 26, 1789.

My excuse for not answering your ladyship's two letters directly, is, that I have been at Park Place, and they waited for me here. This little expedition proves that I have quite recovered of my tumble, of which only a large black mark remains down my side. You are very kind to caution me, but in truth my two late falls have made me so timorous, that I tread with as much awe as if I were to step over nine hot ploughshares.

I am much obliged too for your French anecdotes, madam, which I had not heard. All their proceedings appear to me shocking or absurd to a degree. I do not guess on what grounds Mr. Wyndham foretells their *success*. I had been told that he thought their debates ridiculous, but a prophet has more strings to his bow than one who only forms his opinion by a small share of common sense. Not that I pretend to any sagacity, which must often be at a fault, for it calculates only by probabilities and experience, and

cannot take into its account folly and chance, the two principal arbiters of human affairs; but what does Mr. Wyndham mean by *success?* Is the whole kingdom of France to remain always in such blessed liberty, that every individual is to murder, plunder, and trample on every law? Or out of this lawless and savage scene is order, justice, and temper to arise? Nay, when some constitution is *voted*, will it take place? and if it does, how long will be its duration? Will a new Assembly of *Etats*, elected every two years, corroborate the ordinances of their predecessors? Will they not think themselves as wise, and prove as foolish? What an absurdity is it not to strip the King of all his power, and yet maintain that it is necessary by the laws that he should assent to every act of violence they pass against him? And compelled, will he think himself bound by that forced assent? Is it not, if possible, still more outrageous, and before they have settled anything at home, to be debating whether they shall allow the King of Spain any future claim to the crown? In short, they have launched into an ocean of questions that would take a century to discuss, and suppose that a mob of prating legislators, under the rod of the mob of Paris, and questionable by every tumultuous congregation in the provinces, are an all-powerful senate, and may give laws to other kingdoms as well as to their own; though I do not find that *ces messieurs* can command 20,000 men, and must already have provoked, as they have injured, a very considerable part of their own countrymen. In the midst

of this anarchy, is it not supremely ridiculous to hear of a young gentlewoman presenting her watch to the national fund; and a lifeguardsman five-and-twenty livres? Nay, there are some tradesmen's wives appointed commissioners for receiving such patriotic oblations!—In a word, madam, it is a vertigo of pedantry, and I am surprised they have not yet begun to make songs and epigrams on themselves! But so much do I differ from Mr. Wyndham, that I think they have lost a glorious moment for obtaining a considerable amendment of their constitution, and perhaps a lasting one, by their intemperance; and that they have either entailed endless civil wars on, perhaps, a division of their country, or will sink under worse despotism than what they have shaken off. To turn a whole nation loose from all restraint; and tell them that every man has a right to be his own king, is not a very sage way for preparing them to receive a new code, which must curtail that boundless prerogative of free will, and probably was not the first lesson given on the original institution of government. The present host of lawgivers must, I doubt, cut the throats of half their pupils, before they persuade the other half to go to school again to any regular system.

I would not be uncharitable, but methinks Monsieur Necker's magnificence towards Madame de Polignac, looks a little as if he did not think the queen's influence entirely cut up by the roots. Her mockery, however, is not very captivating.

Madame de Boufflers and the Comtesse Emilie, her

daughter-in-law, I hear, are come to London; and Woronzow, the Russian minister, who has a house at Richmond, is to lend it to her for the winter, as her fortune has received some considerable blow in the present commotions. I pity her much more than the Dame de Polignac, as she could have no hand in causing the grievances, or in the tempestuous correction of them.

I have had no royal visit from Richmond, madam. The Duke of Clarence, no wonder at his age, is already weary of a house in the middle of a village with nothing but a green short apron to the river, a situation only fit for an old gentlewoman who has put out her knee-pans and loves cards. The prince has taken a somewhat better place at Roehampton, and enters upon it at Christmas.

My Straw-Berries are not yet returned, but I expect them next week, and have found a house for them at Teddington very near me.

I am sorry to tell your ladyship, if you do not know it, that Lord Waldegrave is ill of the jaundice at Lord Aylesford's, in Warwickshire. He is rather better than he was, but I believe it is a disorder never cured expeditiously; I am sure not so soon as I wish, who interest myself exceedingly about him.

You go later to your forest, madam, I think, than you used to do. Did your Parisian intelligencer inform you that in the present reign of everybody there has been such a massacre of all game, that pheasants are sold for a penny a piece? I never admired game acts,

but I do not wish to see guns in the hands of all the world, for there are other *ferœ naturæ* besides hares and partridges; and when all Europe is admiring and citing our constitution, I am for preserving it where it is. The decry of prerogative on the continent is a good counter-security to us; I do not think the season will invite anybody to encroach on liberty; and I hope liberty will be content to sit under her own vine and fig-tree, and receive the advantages that France is flinging into her lap.

"Quod optanti divum promittere nemo
Auderet, volvendo Dies en attulit ultro!"

If you pretend not to understand this passage, madam, Lord Ossory will construe it, or if he is abroad shooting, Virgil only means that no speculating banker in England would have dared to bet that our stocks would ever rise to 80 by an influx of French money.

P.S.—I own I shall be curious to see the new constitution of France when it shall be formed, if formed it can be. It must be a curious patchwork composed from sudden and unconnected motions, started in a hurlyburly of disputes, without any plan or system, and voted as fluctuating interests and passions preponderate, sometimes one way, sometimes another, with no harmony in the compost, but calculated to contradict every view of the old government,—or secretly to preserve enough of it to counteract the new. Nay, such a total subversion annihilates all the lawyers as well as all the laws of the kingdom. The

professors may now literally burn their books, for which of them can they quote? This idea might be extended *in infinitum.*

LETTER CCCXXXIV.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 9, 1789.

My letters, madam, except when they ought to hasten with my thanks for any new mark of your goodness, may flit backwards and forwards as often, and for as long as they please. They contain no novelty, and, like ugly persons, will not grow the worse for their age. Years and frequent confinement have thrown me so beside the current of society, that I wonder you have still patience with my correspondence. I have now been pinioned to my couch for a fortnight by the gout again, and am still carried thence to my bed by two servants. My fits are certainly very short, and attended by little pain; but they return so frequently, that they rather give me holidays than intervals. This is the fifth attack in twenty months. Still, I am quite content:—*I do* not wish to be at races or watering-places.

I am sorry your ladyship has lost an opportunity of being acquainted with Mrs. Allanson (the husband I never saw). She has great merit, sense, and spirit, acquired all the good of her mistress, the learned Aspasia, and none of her pretensions and affectations, of which I doubt she was a little weary, though

nobody could behave with more respect and gratitude for really great obligations. Aspasia has both knowledge and wit, with many virtues, but, mercy on us! they are both indefatigably for ever at one's service!

I allow all the merit of "Anacharsis," and do believe your ladyship reads it; but I know that its great vogue at Paris, on its first appearance, was during the first fortnight, when, to be sure, nobody had got through thirty pages of the first volume. I penetrated a great way, and though I was tired of it, it was not from any faults I found; but it did not interest me in the least. Mrs. Damer is a convert, and is now reading it. I broke off at the Lacedemonians, whom I abhor, though I allow the merit your ladyship so justly admires in them, their brevity, and which you still more justly apply in wishing it to the *Tiers Etat.* Do *you* know, madam, that my dear old friend, Madame du Defand, had a mortal aversion to eloquence, though *she* herself, without knowing it, was more naturally eloquent than anybody? I doubt it will lose its credit a little, and that the tongue will not be the arbiter at last of the destiny of France. I see, in the papers, that the prelates of the Germanic provinces absorbed by France, already murmur at the freedoms taken with their privileges by the *Etats.* For these three months I have thought it not unlikely that, considering the number of strong fortresses round the circumference of France, some might be seized by troops in different interests, and even some provinces dismembered. It is more probable than,

that the present chaos should subside into one regular compact government on a foundation totally new. That (the division) would be more beneficial to us and to Europe, than the conquest of it.

I was disgusted, like you, madam, at our pantomimes of the horrors of the Bastille; but they have almost estranged my pity for the exiles, who can go and view such sanguinary farces: without incredible insensibility!

My neighbour, the Duke of Clarence, is so popular, that if Richmond were a borough, and he had not attained his title, but still retained his idea of standing candidate, he would certainly be elected there. He pays his bills regularly himself, locks up his doors at night, that his servants may not stay out late, and never drinks but a few glasses of wine. Though the value of crowns is mightily fallen of late at market, it looks as if his royal highness thought they were still worth waiting for; nay, it is said that he tells his brothers that he shall be king before either—this is fair at least. My last letter from Lady Waldegrave gave a better.

Tuesday night, 13th.

I had just written the above words on Friday, madam, when I was thunderstruck by a note from the duchess, with an account of Lord Waldegrave's extreme danger—I cannot describe the alarm it gave me. My niece, too, being past her time, naturally so tender and so nervous, and so wrapt up in her lord—I expected to lose both at once! Yesterday I

was relieved by a much more favourable account than my best hopes could expect. His disorder has taken a most promising turn, by a vast discharge of bile, and all the letters speak of him as much better. Still I dare not be too sanguine; yet what a change from concluding him gone!

I can say nothing on the atrocious accounts from France, though the last accounts soften the first. One pities the impatient indiscretion of the King and Queen, but the treatment of them is unexampled! What an odious cowardly nation, to let their prince be seized and carried prisoner to his capital, with the most insulting cruel triumph, by a rabble of fish-women! I could almost use the Billingsgate of those furies to express scorn of their men!—and, if possible, my still greater contempt for their *Etats*, who set out with assuming omnipotent power, and are trampled into the dirt by oyster-women!

What becomes of their great air-balloon, Necker, who has already broken several necks, and will soon burst himself, and be the sport of winds? and why does not Mademoiselle d'Eon return and put herself at the head of the *poissardes?* and carry over a code from that Maccabee, Lord George Gordon?

In short, is not France the most contemptible as well as the most *Iroquois* of nations? With any sense and any temper the *Etats* might have obtained a very reformed system of government: with none ready they threw down the whole fabric, and thought that the moment their tongues were loosened, they could

prate themselves into a monarchic republic in which *Le Roi* was to intimidate all Europe, provided he was the tool of Mirabeau and such scoundrels, and of a parcel of abbés and philosophers who thought they could pick out a model from all the various visions and controversies on Government, and that a nation and all its laws, and all its debts could wait till they had framed something on which no three of them would have agreed. I maintain that pert pedantry is the source of all their woes! and has unchained their natural insolent vindictive cruelty. They crouched under Maupéou and the Abbé Terray, who made the late King an absolute despot, and they treat the present inoffensive poor man, as if he were a Louis Onze. They massacred poor old Foulon in the most savage manner, while Calonne and the Archbishop of Sens laugh at their rage: but did not they coolly gag and butcher Lally, who, though a tyrant, like themselves, had great merit towards his country? The Duchess of Polignac, whom I do not excuse, they would have used, had she not escaped, as they did Brunehault and Fredegonde, and as they did not use Isabel of Bavaria, and Catherine of Medicis, who deserved no better,—but at times they are as abject as at other times they are merciless!

To me their great demerit is, that they disgrace the cause of liberty. In this paroxysm of anarchy they have murdered more persons without a shadow of trial, and in eight months, than are executed by legal forms at the instigation of a regular king in twenty years.

If liberty is not tried by its peers, what matters whether there is one Nero, or a million?

LETTER CCCXXXV.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 29, 1789.

I AM not at peace enough, madam, to write much; yet, on the sole subject on which I can talk, it is a little relief to speak to those who know and feel how just my grief is; and as I ought to acknowledge your ladyship's and Lord Ossory's letters, I will tell you the little I know. Lord Aylesford continued and does continue to pay every mark of respect and attention to dear Lord Waldegrave's memory and family. His lordship and his brothers attended the burial last Friday; and his lordship has been so friendly as to accept the guardianship of the children, so they will not quite want a father!

Poor Lady Waldegrave is not yet brought to bed, and they think will go a week longer still. I flatter myself the respite is favourable, as she has passed the first dreadful shock. Her command of herself is as reasonable as can be desired for her safety; to expect more than resignation and patience would be irrational. The duchess stays till her delivery, and is so charmed with her melancholy submission to her fate, and with her piety, and with the enchanting goodness of Lord and Lady Aylesford, that in one of her letters to me she says, in her usual expressive style, "In short, to

learn to live, or to learn to die, one must come to Packington.*

I will endeavour, madam, to imitate my nieces, and act with some reason, that is, so far suspend my sorrow as not to make it a constant theme to others: though a thousand reasons make it a loss to me that I cannot cease to feel while I remain here; but I will be silent!—Your ladyship's most devoted, &c.

LETTER CCCXXXVI.

Strawberry Hill, Sunday night, Nov. 8, 1789.

I HAVE not yet received that essential consolation, madam, of Lady Waldegrave's being safely delivered; and they even think she may go on a month longer—a cruel suspense! But the duchess says she is stronger, and in no danger of not being able to go through her labour; but after the false hopes we had of her lord for three days, I am daunted, and dare not be sanguine.

Your ladyship's letter, which I could not answer then, was very judicious, indeed, on the French *distractions—distracted* they really seem, and worse than savages, for in a state of nature the hurt one man can do to his neighbour is very limited; but a whole nation turned loose to their passions, with all the implements of mischief that have been devised during the improvements of society, and groaning with resentments for oppression, is a million of times worse. Still I can

* Lord Aylesford's house.—ED.

excuse the mob sooner than the *Etats*, who proceed in rending all ties, and overturning all systems, without repairing or replacing any; and increase the confusion by new demolitions, so that I am sometimes tempted to refine so much as to suppose that the concealed friends of the crown, the nobility and the church, encourage the general extravagance in hopes that all orders but the populace will unite, through interest and indignation, to restore the old system. This would have some meaning, though not easily put in practice, as the whole army has been inspired with the same fury as the mob. Perhaps I am too candid; for the *Etats* set out so foolishly, that I know not why I should suspect them of any sense. Their early debate on the title of the King of Spain to the crown, and their discussion on their own king's style, were such characteristics of absurdity, that it is too charitable to impute a grain of sense to them. They might as well have agitated a question whether Louis-Seize should be called Louis-le-Gros, or Louis-le-Simple. One would think he had convoked his heralds, not his *Etats*. What would Europe have thought, if, when Sir E. Hawke burnt so many of their men-of-war, the French academy had consulted how their new ships should be christened? That would have been a puerility worthy of the *Quarante*, and a theme for an epigram on them. The Jews, I see, have addressed those sage legislators—I do not wonder—*They* crucified their King, and called him, on his cross, King of the Jews, not of Judæa; and no doubt, if the *poissardes* offered to deliver King Louis, the Hebrews

would cry out, "Not him, but Lord George Barabbas."

I have still some acquaintance left in France for whom I feel much; some are come over or coming, as Mesdames de Boufflers, and the Duchesse de Lauzun, now Biron, and Madame de Cambis; I have not yet been able to go to them. There are some others who only make me smile, or worse. One is an old Abbesse de St. Antoine, sister of the Prince of Beauvau; she has sent her church-plate to the fund of contributions. You will be diverted by a story I will tell you of her. The last time I was in France, I went with Madame du Deffand to sup at Roissi, Monsieur de Caraman's, whose wife is sister of Madame de Cambis, and niece of the Beauvaus. There we found that old St. Antoine, and a nun instead of a pig. She had been at *les eaux*, and then they may sleep at a relation's on the road. I desired my dear old friend to present me to Madame l'Abbesse, and tell her how good her parents the Prince and Princesse de Craon had been to me formerly at Florence. The old she-hog drew up with all the pride of the House of Lorraine, of which she is a spurious twig, and replied, "*Je suis bien aise, monsieur, que monsieur mon père* (who was not her *père*) *et madame ma mère ont eu*—and then she paused—l'avantage *de connoître monsieur*." Madame du Deffand, who could not bear her impertinence to me, cried out, "*Pardy, madame, vous auriez bien pû dire* l'honneur."

I have not "Anacharsis" here, madam, but I

recollect that Arsame was a flattering picture of Monsieur de Choiseul, who had great parts, and was not a severe minister, but very daring, dashing, and whose good nature would not have checked his ambition from doing any splendid mischief, or from spilling blood by battalions, though perhaps not by a bason full. France owes much of its pecuniary distresses to his waste and political intrigues. From what an abyss have their extravagancies of all kinds saved us, if we have the wisdom to profit of our tranquillity and advantages! Among the greater points of security at home, of the safety of India, of our commerce extending as theirs must languish, and of the recovery of the empire of the ocean by the decay of their marine, we ought to reckon not only the influx of their money, but the retention of our own, which used to be lavished so widely in France. I made a random computation above twenty years ago (and calculation is not my bright side) that the English wasted annually in France above 500,000*l.* When I was there in 1765, their late king said that by the returns from Calais 40,000 English had passed through there, though but two years after the peace: if half were tradesmen, cooks, and barbers *pour s'instruire*, not one went and returned for so little as five pounds. Though that was a tide that had been dammed up, I believe the emigrations of late years have been as numerous. Two years ago there were above sixty English families at Nice; and a year ago there were said to be 40,000 English in France and Lorraine—

numbers indeed from economy, but thrift itself does not live in France on French money, nor on what it proposes to save, nor is it easy to save, where everything is charged so high to a Milor Anglois. But I shall drop wisdom and supputation, and return to "Anacharsis." The Abbé Barthelemy was devoted to the Duchesse de Choiseul, and was always at Chanteloup, and she had obtained two or three emoluments for him: the incense to her husband, I believe, was offered in compliment to her.

To divert my thoughts a little in the many melancholy, lonely hours that I have passed in these three months, and to turn them to the only reading I could relish in the present position of Europe, modern history, I have been reading again, as I have often done, "Voltaire's Universal History." I suppose, from the various circumstances that have struck me with regard to the actual state of France, I admire it more than ever, though I always thought it his *chef d'œuvre*. It is a marvellous mass both of genius and sagacity, and the quintessence of political wisdom as well as of history. Any one chapter on a single reign, as those of Philip II., Henry IV., Richelieu, Elizabeth, Cromwell, is a complete picture of their characters and of their times. Whatever may be said of his incorrectness in some facts, his observations and inferences are always just and profound. I wish you would read it again, madam; there are twenty passages that look as if written within these six months. More than once he allows the cruel nature of his countrymen in turbulent

times. The story of the whole modern world is comprised in less space than that of the three centuries of diminutive Greece in the tedious travels of Anacharsis, who makes you remember rather than reflect. On the other hand, I am sorry I cannot agree with your ladyship; Mr. Gibbon never tires me. He comprises a vast body and period of history too; however, I do wish he had been as lucid as Voltaire, or to speak more justly, that he had arranged his matter better, for by vast leaps backwards and forwards, or by not drawing nearer together contemporary times, you have forgotten the personages to whom he returns; but how I run on! I fear my confinement and solitude have drawn me into trespassing on your ladyship's patience; luckily my small paper reminds me that a letter is not a dissertation, though I doubt my close, little hand sometimes sufficiently gratifies its propensity to prattling, when it is in train.—Good night, madam.

LETTER CCCXXXVII.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 26, 1789.

I DO not know in which of your palaces your ladyship is resident at present; but, not having mentioned your return to Ampthill, I conclude you still in Northamptonshire. If I mistake, it will not signify; my letter, if stale by taking a circuit, will be just the same, for I have nothing fresh to tell you, madam, and only answer a paragraph or two in your last, out of decorum.

I said nothing of the Duc d'Orleans, as knowing nothing, and from not thinking him worth inquiry. He appears to me like one of the two gentlemen who often open the first scene of a French tragedy, and then have no more part in the play. I have been twice in town to see three of the *refugees* with whom I used to live very much at Paris, the Comtesse de Boufflers, the Duchess de Lauzun, now of Biron, and Madame de Cambis. I cannot say that they once named their princely ambassador. Madame de Boufflers has lost a great part of her income, and is mortified, as she may well be, at quitting her beautiful English *parc* at Auteuil. Indeed, the horrors they all relate make one abhor Lord Stanhope and his *priestly* firebrands who would raise Presbyterian conflagrations here. One story will touch you; the little dauphin, who is but four years old, and a beautiful child, was learning fables: the one in waiting ended by saying of the animal that was the subject of it, that, though she had had great misfortunes, she became at last *heureuse comme des reines*. He said, "Hah! toutes les reines ne sont pas heureuses, car maman pleure depuis le matin jusqu'au soir."

It was said a year ago that a whole *armoire* of Madame de Sevigné's letters to a Monsieur de la Grange had been found; but I did not believe it, nor have heard any more of them. I have two of her original letters; Lady Rivers brought me a long one the last time she was in England, but it is one of the printed. The other the Comte de Grave obtained for me from Monsieur de Castellane, who married a grand-

daughter of Pauline; but it is one of the very *larmoyantes*, written at Nos Filles de St. Marie, on one of the days of Madame de Grignan's departures. I have, besides, an original letter of Madame de Maintenon, which was given to me at St. Cyr by one of the nuns; but I laid it up so carefully somewhere, that I cannot find it. Monsieur de Grave is an exceedingly good sort of man: he lodged at St. Joseph, in the apartment above Madame du Deffand, and was very intimate with her. It was he who went with me and Mrs. Cholmondeley and another English lady to St. Cyr, where we passed five hours, by permission of the Bishop of Chartres, and I sat in the Maintenon's own seat, during the mass, and afterwards heard the young ladies pensioners act dialogues written for them by their foundress, whom the abbess told me she remembered—but she seemed to remember nothing else!

Taylor's book was shewn to me this summer by one of those wiseacres that call themselves learned men, and who told me it was tremendous. I was neither alarmed nor curious: yet, on your ladyship's notice, I borrowed the "Monthly Review," and find that the world's future religion is to be founded on a blundered translation of an almost unintelligible commentator on Plato. I guess, however, that the religion this new apostle recommends is, not belief in the pantheon of Pagan divinities, but the creed of the philosophers, who really did not believe in their idols, but whose metaphysics were frequently as absurd; and yet this half-witted Taylor prefers them to Bacon and Locke, who

were almost the first philosophers who introduced common sense into their writings, and were as clear as Plato was unintelligible—because he did not understand himself. Taylor will have no success; not because nonsense is not suited to making proselytes, witness the Methodists, Moravians, Baron Swedenborg, and Loutherbourg the painter; but it should not be learned nonsense, which only the *literati* think they understand after long study. Absurdities, announced only to the ear, and easily retained by the memory, have other guess operation; not that I have any objection to Mr. Taylor's making proselytes—the more religions the better. If we had but two in the island, they would cut one another's throats for power. When there is plenty of beliefs, the professors only gain customers here and there from rival shops, and make more controversies than converts.

Lady Waldegrave is not yet delivered, and her parting with the duchess, who left her last week, was a great addition to her grief.

You order me to name my own health, and therefore I do, madam. I am quite recovered; and, having just had a fit of the gout, I depend on its not returning and have ventured to stay here through all our deluges, and have not suffered in the least. It is very kind in your ladyship to make that inquiry, but I cannot endure that jackanapes-paper the world, notifying so extremely an unimportant circumstance as my recovery to so many persons who cannot possibly care a straw about me. A clergyman last week brought me

three paragraphs that he had cut out of *Worlds* with my name in them. Surely the writer might knock down better game than an old valetudinarian sitting quietly by his fire-side in the country, and who never even sees his paper. It is very hard one may not be superannuated when one pleases!

LETTER CCCXXXVIII.

Strawberry Hill, Dec. 6, 1789.

I AM afraid, madam, I can give but unsatisfactory answers to most of your ladyship's questions, for my memory is much upon its wane; and my information is very slender. Both the king and queen have been extremely concerned for Lord Waldegrave; and the king, I believe, did defer giving away the regiment for a month, that Lady Waldegrave might be benefited by the delay. She was brought to bed of a daughter on the 2nd, and I trust is in a good way.

My meaning about the Armada-tapestry, I suppose, was, that the republic had more taste than James and Charles, and hung it where it would often be seen: no particular compliment could be meant to the House of Lords, which was no longer a house of Lords then—but I protest I cannot answer for what I said so long ago, and which was not worth a thought since.

I can still less give a positive answer about Mad. de Sevigné's letter, but that it is what I told your ladyship, a *larmoyante* one, and not about any duel. I

have entirely forgot how M. de Grave got it; and am quite ignorant whether the M. de Castellane whom I knew, is living or not. He was not a descendant of Pauline, but had married one. I never saw a picture of Pauline, nor do I know who possesses her house or Grignan. George Selwyn was at the latter, and has told me to whom it belongs—but it is gone out of my head.

I did hear of Lord Orford's letters on astronomy in a book of agriculture, but I have had too many deplorable proofs of his lunacy, to be curious after more.

The print of Necker I return, madam, but I protest I do not understand any part of it—however, I am not sorry to see that even in such trumpery they imitate us clumsily.

The Berrys are at Teddington, and it is on their account that I have stayed here later than I ever did. They go to town next week, and so shall I. I hope I may not be quite so dry and dull there, as I am to day—but if you had not ordered me to return the print, I think I should have postponed my *no* answers to your queries, for I am a total blank at present, and know nothing to amuse you. Indeed no mortal is so barren, when I have nothing at the point of my pen to say—when I have, it gallops sufficiently.

George has called while I was writing, and says Grignan belongs now to a Monsieur Dorliere—or did before the *Etats* met—

"Hemp may grow now where Troy town stood!"

LETTER CCCXXXIX.

Strawberry Hill, Dec. 12, 1789.

I GIVE your ladyship abundant thanks for your congratulations on Lady Waldegrave's delivery: she and her little orphan are well, and I trust safe.

I return your ladyship the *Herveyan* letter, which is a more proper word than *frantic:* it did not surprise me at all: his father was always attempting to excite compassion by the most virulent abuse on his nearest relations. Besides, I have seen and received parallel epistles. I had one a year and a half ago: I made no answer, but told Mrs. E. Hervey, his mother's and his most kind friend, that I could not refuse giving a little money to a man of quality, with whose family I had been so much acquainted all my life; and did give her five guineas for him. He, I know from Lady Ailesbury, has grossly abused Mrs. E. Hervey since, to whom he has had great obligations. He wrote to me again this spring; I threw his letter into the fire, and sent no reply. I would not hinder Lord Ossory's charity, but he certainly had better not write, for when a gentleman can beg in that abject manner, he would probably print the letter, like many of those worthless beings, whose flattery and scurrility are employed indifferently for half-a-crown.

I was in town on Wednesday, and was told that the emperor had made a truce for two months with the Flemings, which was likely to be followed by a peace.

I am glad that they will be relieved, and that *He* is baffled and mortified. There is as wide a difference between Joseph and Louis, as between their present situations. The latter, without being an aggressor, was willing to amend a very bad government, and has been treated like a Sicilian Dionysius, and has seen numbers of his innocent subjects massacred, &c. Joseph, with the flippancy of a French prater, has violated oaths and laws, and plundered, in order to support an unjust war of ambition, while he is the tool of the northern Semiramis, whom I call by a name that sounds quite Russian, *Catharine Slay-Czar,—à propos,* madam, have you seen Mr. Cambridge's excellent verses, called "The Progress of Liberty?" They were printed last Wednesday in a newspaper called "The Times," but there ascribed to a young lady. They are as happy a composition, in their way, as Bonner's Ghost.

Have you heard, too, that one of the wings of Houghton, not Houghton your cousin, is burnt down? I know not by what accident. I said, burnt *down;* but stone walls, and such walls, are not easily consumed. In my father's time, one of the cellars was on fire, but only a door was destroyed. As the gallery is burnt, the glorious pictures have escaped—or are reserved to be consumed in a wooden palace on the first revolution at Petersburg.

You will please, madam, to direct your next commands to Berkeley-square, whither I shall go on Tuesday for some time.—Yours, &c.

LETTER CCCXL.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 26, 1789.
End of an extraordinary year!

It is too late in the month, madam, to return your Christmas wishes, and too late in my life to repay your most agreeable new-year's-gift of Lord Holland's verses, which *talk* good sense with so much ease, that instead of prophecying that he will be a poet, I will boldly venture to foretell that he will be of a much higher class, and will be worthy of his grandfather and uncle. He cannot think half-a-quarter so well of me, if he imagines that I cared a straw about a trumpery pane of glass, that had actually been cracked and mended before.—

"The old man tells his story—"

but does not fret about a bit of painted glass, as Lord Holland will find, if he will do me the honour of coming again to Strawberry when I am there. He has made himself free of my house as a noble author, though I shall not live to record him.

Of the new noble authoress dowager I had not heard a word; be so good in your next, madam, to tell me if her "Tractate" (as Milton called his, and which I suppose was a more severe institution than her ladyship's,) is published, and by what title.

I did not know Mrs. Hervey's new novel was published yet; I saw it announced some time ago, but have

forgotten the title: it will keep cold. The former was well written, but the ideas very stale. I am tired of books that add nothing new to the mass. I cannot say the princes are like our novels: their behaviour, though negative, has certainly introduced *variety* into *manners*. "Nous avons changé tout cela" is not very sage, when Europe is so disposed to *changer tout cela*.

The town says, but I cannot believe it, that the Brabanters have offered their vacant coronet to the Bishop of Osnaburg. Humphrey Duke of Gloucester espoused Duchess Jacqueline, but neither kept her nor the duchy. I have not looked on the map, but I think both Osnaburg and Hanover lie nearer to Vienna than Brabant. It seems to me, too, that the right reverend father in God has a better chance than he would have of remaining sovereign of Flanders; for *bouleversées*, as Flanders and France are, our experience is not old enough yet to convince me that the fermentation in either, especially in the latter, will not have a notable revulsion. In France it is a frenzy, which I believe will have the same effect as in the human body—it will be cured or make the patient destroy himself. Their government was detestable, and might have been much corrected; but to dissolve all government, without the shadow of a system ready to replace it, and to imagine that twenty-four millions can be moulded into an entirely new constitution at once totally repugnant to every law that had existed; and that such bungling operators as *Messrs. les Etats* have shewn themselves, can tinker up by detached votes such a frame of legislation as will suit so

vast a kingdom, does not enter into my conception. They have really pleased nobody internally but the most ignorant and unhappy peasantry, who have been let loose from all restraints, and in a manner instructed to gratify their spleen. I pity them, who will probably be exposed to the still worse excesses of an army without discipline and without pay. But what signify my reveries? I shall neither live to see them hatched nor addled.

Many happy new years to Ampthill, and a less unhappy one than the last half to—Yours, &c.

LETTER CCCXLI.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 30, 1789.

THOUGH I have nothing but thanks for Lord Holland's * verses to send you, madam, I must send them. I am extremely pleased with his variety of metres, and, if I may decide, prefer his heroics. If I may criticize, his trochaics are not always perfect, now and then wanting a syllable, as in "I resolve to perform whatever's my duty," and the next, and in one or two others. I do not delight in that measure but at least it should be complete to the ear. He is excellent in rhymes, and so is Lord Ossory, too, whose poetry I am very glad to have gained, by the by. It is refreshing to read natural easy poetry, full of sense and humour, instead of that unmeaning,

* The late Lord Holland, then a boy.—ED.

laboured, painted style, now in fashion, of the Della Cruscas and Co., of which it is impossible ever to retain a couplet, no more than one could remember how a string of emeralds and rubies were placed in a necklace. Poetry has great merit, if it is the vehicle and preservative of sense, but it is not to be taken in change for it.

I do not, certainly, mean to pay Lord Holland for his verses, by sending him my fourth volume, which, though in prose, is no work of sense; it is merely to complete his set of a register; and he shall have it, if your ladyship will be so good as to tell me how to convey it.

A knock at the door saves your ladyship and me from adding any nonsense to my letter.

LETTER CCCXLII.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 30, 1790.

To be sure, I am glad you have been delighted with your travels; but lord! madam, how could you think (perhaps you did not think) of being pleased with beauties and prospects at home? Mr. Gilpin has more taste; he despised the richness, verdure, amenity of Richmond Hill, when he had seen rocks and lakes in the north; for size and distance of place add wonderfully to loveliness. From your first letter, I had more hopes of you: you were shocked at the rude mechanics, who thrust their callous hands into Dame Nature's

bosom, and tear away all her dugs to get at her iron ribs, for the vile purposes of commerce and luxury; but you have relapsed, and are enchanted with Wales, and Chirk Castle, and twenty baubles, that everybody may visit in a week's time, without risk, and without the chance of a single hyæna running against your leg, as you went to your lodging at night. Can you boast of having discovered the source of the Dee or the Severn, which was not achieved by all antiquity, nor can be paralleled by all posterity, though the inhabitants of all the Welsh counties, that is the Gallæ, have, or may have seen those sources every day since the beginning of time? I will say no more on that subject, madam, though I could write five volumes in quarto to shew, by precedent, that you ought first to have gone to Dover Castle or Fountains Abbey, however far out of your way, and though you could have said nothing new about them; and to have given an account of the trade of the Irish channel, before you sought any river on this side of it.

I firmly believe all the beauties of Wales, and regret having never seen them while I was able, especially Picton Castle, the seat of my maternal ancestry, from a window of which one of my grandsires, Sir Richard Phillips, who was no taller than I am broad, was dragged and made prisoner by a colonel of the republicans, while parleying about a surrender, when besieged by them.

Of the charms of Chirk Castle, I never heard before; but how few have eyes! and till somebody has, the

rest only look, till they have been taught to see, by hearing others have seen. Of Nuneham, I doubt, you were not half so fond as I am. It is not superb, but so calm, *riant,* and comfortable, so live-at-able, one wakes in a morning on such a whole picture of beauty!

Your ladyship's story of Mrs. Hodges rousing Lady Ravensworth at midnight, to borrow a pack of cards, reminds me of the Duke of Wharton, who knocked up his guardian, whom he hated, in the middle of the night, to borrow a pin; but, pray, does she *order* supper for *six* at Lady Ravensworth's, too?

To Lady *Ambrosia* Sydney I am an utter stranger; I suppose she was not Sir Henry, but Sir *Nectar* Sydney's daughter.

I am as little acquainted with Miss Ponsonby and Miss Buttershaw; I think I saw something in a newspaper about them, but I mind so little what I read there, that it made no impression, nor did I recollect to inquire; so your ladyship has told me more than I can possibly tell you of them. Are they relations of her you call the *beautiful* Countess Talbot?

Poor St. Winifrede and poor Wynnstay! *sic transit gloria mundi,* and of those who never were *in mundo.* Who is it says, that crowned heads and cane heads must equally come to the ground? Sir Watkyn's father was called Prince of Wales: the head of its last sovereign did not come to the ground, but was fixed on the rails of the Tower—the present era is preaching moral lessons to all of the calling, and St. Winifrede is lucky to be out of danger—'tis well for her she is not

at Avignon! There are fresh horrors from that neighbourhood; and Paris is in such a ferment that new swarms of French are flocking hither; but I have been so ample in my answer to your ladyship's two entertaining letters, that I have not left myself an inch of paper to say more. Oh! here is half of my paper that I thought filled, untouched! I perceive I had folded it back as soon as I had written the first page; and as I wrote my letter late at night to be ready for our early post next morning, I was half asleep, and dreamt I had scribbled the whole sheet. Well, madam, all the mishap will be, that you will have my news as dry as a chip before you receive it.

At Marseilles—I think it was at Marseilles—a Monsieur Cazalet, and of his name I am not sure, to secure himself (being known, I suppose, for no friend to the Chaos), had just taken the civic oath, and thereupon had been invited to dine with the *maire!* On a sudden they heard a violent clamour in the street, and, opening the window, beheld a furious mob, who being asked what they wanted, answered, "the head of Cazalet." On that he was concealed; but the savages broke in, found him, dragged him down stairs by his hair, and then by one leg through the streets, till he lost his senses, when, putting a rope round his neck, they were going to dispatch him; but two grenadiers, shocked at such barbarities, drew their sabres, rescued the sufferer, kept off the ruffians, and conveyed the poor martyr into a house: but he expired the moment he arrived!

At Paris, I have told you, madam, confusion increases. A formal denunciation has been made to the domineering tribunal against Necker, who is accused of having advanced a million of livres to La Fayette, for the purpose of exciting or promoting the revolt in Brabant—how justly I know it—but when anarchy is abroad, its centurions are not a whit more safe than their antagonists. There is a sentence in Juvenal, that Lord Ossory will translate, that comprises the whole code of such times,

" —— Verso pollice vulgi
Quemlibet occidunt populariter—"

What a nation are the French! Sometimes carrying slavery to idolatry of their tyrants; sometimes gorging their native insolence with all the extravagance of cruelty!

LETTER CCCXLIII.

Strawberry Hill, Dec. 1, 1790.

INDEED, my too indulgent lady, my letters are written so idly, and filled with such trifles as occur, as Arabian tales, &c., that they are very unfit to be seen by any but yourselves, for whose amusement I send them; and being generally only answers to yours, they must be Hebrew to anybody else. This is merely a reply to your last. Madame de Sillery's protest against the *Monseigneur* was no panic, but an emanation of that *poissarde* cant that her recreant protector has

adopted. When the late emperor died, she forbade her pupils to mourn for him. The Duc de Chartres obeyed. The Duc de Montpensier, the second son, about seventeen, would not, but bespoke a black coat. La Gouvernante said to him, "quelle fantaisie est-ce cela?" "Fantaisie!" cried the prince, "est-ce une fantaisie que de vouloir porter le deuil de l'empereur?" "Well then!" said the mock Minerva, "you shall have no other coat till that is worn out." Would not one think that the Duc de Chartres was *her* son, and the two others sprung from Henri Quatre by the *Duchess* of Orleans?

One word more about Mr. Burke's book: I know the tirade on the Queen of France is condemned, and yet I must avow I admire it much. It paints her exactly as she appeared to me the first time I saw her when dauphiness. She was going after the late king to chapel, and shot through the room like an aërial being, all brightness and grace, and without seeming to touch earth—*vera incessu patuit dea!* Had I Mr. Burke's powers, I would have described her in his words. I like "the swords leaping out of their scabbards;" in short, I am not more charmed with his wit and eloquence, than with his enthusiasm. Every page shews how sincerely he is in earnest—a wondrous merit in a political pamphlet. All other party writers *act* zeal for the public, but it never seems to flow from the heart. That cordiality, like a phial of spirits, will preserve his book, when some of his doctrines would have evaporated in fume. Lord Stanhope's were the ravings

of a lunatic, imagining he could set the world on fire with phosphorus. Lord Lansdowne, I hear, said there was some good sense in that rant. How fortunate that Price and his adherents were intoxicated by their own hopes, and flattered themselves that Europe was in so combustible a temper, that by throwing their farthing squibs from a pulpit, they should set even this country in a blaze, and like the wretches hanged last week for burning houses, should plunder some silver candlesticks from the altars in our churches, to which *the rights of men* entitle them. That proclamation of the "Rights of Men," is *ipso facto* a dissolution of all society, into which men entered for the defence of the rights of every individual. The consequence of universal equality would be, that the industrious only would labour, the idle not. Who then would be to maintain the inactive? Must the produce of the labours of the laborious be shared with the indolent? Oh, but there should be some government—then the governed would not be equal with the governors; but it is idle to confute nonsense! All the blessed liberty the French seemed to have gained is, that every man or woman, if *poissardes* are women, may hang whom they please. Dr. Price adopting such freedom, opened the nation's eyes—*Honi soit qui mal y pense!*

P.S.—Your ladyship forgot to send me the solution of the riddle.

LETTER CCCXLIV.

Strawberry Hill, Dec. 9, 1790.

YOUR ladyship has furnished me with so many subjects, that I doubt whether I shall be able to crowd my answers into a single sheet of my small paper. I may branch into a pamphlet, while I am only replying to what you have said to me; but I must preface all by imploring you not to exhibit my letters. Though I am and must be proud of Lady Ravensworth's approbation of my sentiments, for I should not be a mortal if I had not a grain of vanity, nor should be believed if I denied it, for whoever has been imprudent enough to be an author must have had some; yet I am seriously in earnest in begging you will not shew my letters. Foolish as I have been in publishing anything, it is my sober desire now not to have my name brought into question: I wish to pass my remnant of days forgotten and in indolent quiet; yet by having formerly committed myself in public, the impertinent newspapers bandy about my name, though I give not the smallest handle for it: an instance you mention, madam, is a proof. Mr. Burke ordered Dodsley to send me his book, though I have not seen him three times in three years. Good breeding obliged me to thank him, and my real admiration called on me to avow it—yet, will you believe me, madam? what is now called a *fine letter*, I might safely swear, did not contain six lines; and all it said was, that unless I could write as well as

he does, I could not fully express my admiration, yet did not doubt but he would have that of mankind. I do not recollect the very words, but am sure that was the whole substance, and am much mistaken if that was a *fine letter;* nor would it ever have entered into my head, no, nor into vanity's own head, to talk of such a simple compliment,—and yet I have been told that it has been mentioned in a newspaper! I cannot suspect that Mr. Burke could think it worth his while to talk of such a natural civility; but somebody might be with him when he received it, and must have reported it, till it descended to the newspapers. Let me intreat your ladyship not to contribute to my being game for coffee-houses; my vanity does not reach *jusque-là.* Alas! if my preface has got over leaf, how shall I keep the rest within any bounds!

I am not surprised at Mr. Fox or Mr. Fitzpatrick for disliking *the extent* of Mr. Burke's notions: I should be mortified if the former did not admire the composition, and should readily distrust my own judgment, if the latter and Mr. Hare did not keep me in countenance. The last, I have been told, says, that though he would submit to Mr. Fox in everything else, he cannot give up Mr. Burke's book. I, who have more reason to be humble, and who certainly shall not set up my understanding against one so superior as Mr. Fox's, cannot help being rejoiced at its publication. Being a speculative and not a practical politician, my opinion may be biased by outward circumstances. I acknowledge, too, that I am apt to have strong prejudices both when I

like and dislike; and, though time has worn them down to at least a smoother surface, I believe that the wit and eloquence of the work in question contributed to enchant me. Yet I must persist, without any variation in my principles, in applauding the publication *at the present moment*, when Reformation is gone raving mad, and, like Ceres, with blazing torches, would set fire to and destroy all the harvests upon earth, because her daughter's liberty had been ravished. Reformation, which is everywhere perpetually wanted, is, I am grieved to say, a most dangerous chief-justice, and more apt to *terminer* than to *oyer*, and to commit more spoil than the criminals it arrests. This is no novelty of opinion in me. Thirty years ago I had a dispute with Dame Macaulay on the same ground. I told her it was a settled maxim of mine *that no great country was ever saved by good men*, because good men will not go the lengths that may be necessary. Was *the Revolution* brought about by good men? No, the best patriots hesitated; the worst, Lord Sunderland, did not boggle—he pushed King James down the precipice. I went farther; I owned to her that I should always be a coward about spilling the blood of others, and at this moment mine recoils when I hear the advocates of the French *Etats* cry, "a Revolution cannot be effected without blood, and that in France has cost but little!" My heavens! who has a patent from above, and without law, to shed a drop? In that case, I fear, the *forum conscientiæ* is a most wicked tribunal. I went much farther, I remember with Mrs. Macaulay: I said,

"Madam, had I been Luther, and could have known (even if persuaded that I was right in my premises, nay, had I even thought I was inspired), that for *the chance* of saving millions of souls I should be the cause of a million of lives, at least, being sacrificed before my doctrines could be established, it must have been a most palpable angel, and in a most heavenly livery, before he should have set me to work." Thus I am but uniform, not changed.

Another of my tenets, not a very practicable one, is this: the excellence of our constitution consists in the balance of the three powers. Unfortunately it is the nature of a balance to fluctuate by a breath of air. I have lived long enough to see King, Lords, Commons, preponderate at different periods. The political rule that I would wish always to see followed, should be, that whenever any one of the three powers preponderates, the other two should join against and counteract it. The first power has undoubtedly of late years been the heaviest; but that fourth power, that within these two years has started out of the earth like the black cloud in the "Arabian Nights," and which dispersing, disclosed an infernal Afrite—that power does not tend to balance, but overturn all three. Mr. Burke, with Solomon's seal, has put the evil spirits to flight; and though his talisman, I confess, will remain and be serviceable to Pharoah's priests hereafter, I am poor-spirited enough to comfort myself with the appearance of the lovely gaudy rainbow that promises me security from the deluge I apprehended; and I have

another comfort, which is, the shock lately given through Europe to prerogative is a counter security to liberty. Their Majesties will be content with what prerogative they can preserve from the convulsion, and not think of extending it for some years, unless the ravage of anarchy in France drives three or four of them to unite to suppress it, as they may do now on the pacification of Brabant. I own I felt for the latter, they were provoked by the despotism of the late emperor; and acted from better, though mistaken, notions than the French, for the Flemings meant the defence of their religion; the French, though most intolerant, as Mr. Burke has shewn, have no religion at all. This capital discordance between the two rebellions may have very wholesome consequences. If the confusions in France are quelled by force, as I conclude they will be, the present prosecution of the clergy there would be likely to produce a full restoration of the Papal system; but that will be counterbalanced by the late enthusiasm of the Flemings; but I am running into speculations, which always contract a propensity to prediction. I hope I have explained and cleared my own principles; with all my prejudices, I have given proofs of moderation before. My own old friends have blamed my tenderness to Lord Clarendon, my palliation of Charles I. for his countenancing Lord Glamorgan, and my doubting the disinterestedness of Mr. Hampden. Perhaps it is no mighty crime not to please either side, provided not a glimpse of self-interest is the consequence, of which I hope I am clear;

except that being by my station an aristocrat, and by my father's goodness a placeman for life, I cannot wish to be swept into the common sewers. I avow all, I conceal nothing, but I maintain that I am not changed in any principle; yet, if one must make an option between Mirabeau and Mr. Burke, I declare I am a Burkist.

There are a few other passages I wish to answer, but my poor hand is so weary by writing all this in a breath, that I must stop and cannot send it away to-day.

Friday, 10th.

I have seen good old Lord George and would have persuaded him to read the pamphlet, which I acknowledged I admired, as I have to Mrs. Bouverie; but did not prevail. What your ladyship says of the authoresses of your sex does not proceed from want of strength of head, but from the rarity of grave discussions among them. When they do inform themselves, they know their acquisitions are uncommon, and it makes them vain. I have seen it the case of great lawyers retired from business, who, having taken to reading the classics, have quoted the commonplaces of Horace, which an Etonian of twenty would blush to cite, knowing all his contemporaries were as familiar with them as he. I thank your ladyship for your impartiality in telling me of Lady Ravensworth's partiality to my niece. I flatter myself she is not undeserving of either, and wish she was so happy as to be equally known to both!

LETTER CCCXLV.

Strawberry Hill, Thursday evening, Jan. 6, 1791.

I HAVE been ill for three weeks, madam, with some gout and a good deal of rheumatism, and this is the first day in which I have been able to walk (with help) from my bedchamber to the blue room: but, as I hate to tire anybody with common habitual complaints, or to trouble them to inquire after me, I have kept my ails to myself as much as I could. I do certainly mend, though very slowly: no wonder, at my age, and with such a frame! Still I have great cause to be thankful, for though the husk is as slight as the shell of a paper nautilus, the core is of iron wood. My appetite (no voracious one) never fails; and for sleep it is at my command, as if I had a guardian angel (poor angel!) always at my elbow, for I have nothing to do, day or night, but to shut my eyes, and Ariel seals them; however, he has a good deal of time to himself, for I indulge myself and him in that sinecure for half the four and twenty hours.

Such having been my Christmas gambols, madam, it is impossible I can have anything to entertain you. I mean, if I can with safety, to be conveyed to London next week; but I am a great coward about relapses, and never lay in a stock of patience but for the first edition of a fit, and therefore shall not be too precipitate.

Lady Douglas will live; but at present the disorder has fallen on her eyes, but I hope not desperately.

This has been an effort, and now I must rest.—Here, Ariel!

LETTER CCCXLVI.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 20, 1791.

I HAVE indeed, madam, been much worse since I gave your ladyship the last account of myself; and that much worse is indeed very far from being much better. I have the gout, or rheumatism, or both in every joint of both arms and hands, and for three days could neither open nor attend to the prologue you were so good as to send me, and which I believe I shall admire whenever my head is clear enough to know what I do like. I have no dangerous symptoms, but here I lie, balloted between pain, extreme weakness, and some cordage of a constitution that still ties the skeleton together.

LETTER CCCXLVII.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 28, 1791.

YOU and Lord Ossory have been so very good to me, madam, that I must pay you the first tribute of my poor reviving fingers—I believe they never will be their own men again; but as they have lived so long in your ladyship's service, they shall shew their attachment to the last, like Widdrington on his stumps. I have had another, and grievous memento, the death of poor Selwyn! His end was lovely, most composed and

rational. From eight years old I had known him intimately without a cloud between us; few knew him so well, and consequently few knew so well the goodness of his heart and nature—but I will say no more —*Mon. Chancelier vous dira le reste.**—No, my chancellor shall put an end to the session, only concluding as Lord Bacon would have done for King James, with an apologue, "His majesty's recovery has turn'd the corner, and exceeding the old fable, has proved that the stomach can do better without the limbs than they could without him."—Adieu, madam.

LETTER CCCXLVIII.

Berkeley Square, Monday noon, April 25, 1791.

You flew away, madam, without clapping your wings or giving the least notice; and by your ordering me to send you news, it looks as if you were taking roost—I hope, not yet. I did perch on my opening lilacs on Saturday, but was obliged to return just now for my nephew Lord Cholmondeley's match *with the charming over the way*, which, I hear, is to be very fine in clothes and lace, Lady Ducie having revived that old-fashioned, and I think, absurd, finery. It is to be this evening.

Easter and my absence makes me totally ignorant of news, but what I left last week, now a little stale; and I have seen nobody yet to refresh that little or much

* Here begins Kirgate's hand-writing in the MSS.—Ed.

(for I know not which either of the articles imports, I mean the Indian news and the resignation of the Duke of Leeds). The first was dispersed as a defeat; but on Friday evening, like many defeats, was construed into a victory. Why the duke retired, and whether he too is not to rally and have some other post, and who is to cross over and figure in with him, I cannot tell; two or three have been named—but it is as well not to know, as to send you falsehoods.

Last night I was at Richmond with the Birons and Boufflers. The young Duc de Richelieu, of a very different character from his grandfather and father, and consequently very amiable, is arrived, and the Duc de Pienne, and Madame de St. Priest and her husband following. The horrors at Paris increase, and Mirabeau's death will probably let them widely loose; for his abilities being almost as great as his villanies, there seems to be nobody left with parts enough to control the rest. Anarchy must stride on, and people will find out that a dissolution of all government, is not the best way of reforming even the worst. Crimes made some kind of government originally necessary; but, till now, nobody ever thought that giving the utmost latitude to all crimes, was the surest mode of keeping mankind in order and happy; and yet, with that universal indulgence of the rights of men, the French prisons are twenty times fuller than ever they were—except of assassins and plunderers! It is my opinion, that some of the National Assembly will, ere long, dislike being exposed to armies of banditti, and not find their own

eighteen livres a day perfectly secure; yet I shall not wonder if Mirabeau's rapid wealth should encourage other beggarly innovators. Adieu! madam, but I hope not for long, and that you will return.

LETTER CCCXLIX.

Berkeley Square, April 30, 1791.

I THANK your ladyship for your felicitation on my nephew's marriage. It is certainly a proper one, and suitable enough in age, rank, fortune, and good nature; but it was far from a fine or ceremonious wedding. We were but eighteen persons present; nobody but the reigning Duchess of Ancaster had a diamond; and, except myself, (who had an inkling of silver in my waistcoat, though since my abandoning Courts and public places I have left off gold and silver,) the men were so undrest, that had they been dirty too, they might have gone afterwards to the largest assembly in town: not so my Lord Cardigan's wedding, for which the king and queen make new clothes—an honour unprecedented, at least for two centuries. King James I., perhaps, was very fine at the marriage of some of his buffoons.

The uproar is begun at Paris, and everybody that can is leaving it. Three or four of their *late* dukes are arrived, and La Fayette is expected. The Duke of Orleans gains ground, for he has some money left; but having neither character nor courage, it shews how

little exists of either. Mobs can destroy a government for a time, but it requires the greatest talents and the greatest firmness—ay, and time too, to recompose and establish one. The French might have had a good government, if the National Assembly had had sense, experience, moderation, and integrity; but wanting all, they have given a lasting wound to liberty. They have acted, as that nation has always done, from the fashion of the hour, and with their innate qualities, cruelty and insolence: and when this hurricane is blown over, the anarchy of France will always be quoted as worse than despotism; and it should be remembered that an attempt to suppress general prejudices by violence and a total change, does but inflame and root those prejudices more deeply in the sufferers. What hundred thousands of lives did *the Reformation* cost? And was it general at last? What feeling man would have been Luther, if he could have foreseen the blood he should occasion to be spilt? For Calvin, he was a monster. His opposing the Papacy, and burning Servetus, proved him as bad, if not worse, than any of the popes. How different are English and French! How temperate are the Americans! How unlike the villain Mirabeau to Washington! How odious is a reformer who acts from ambition or interest!—and what are moments of gratified ambition or interest to endless obloquy? Our constitution proves that no good government can be formed at once, or at once reformed; and reason, without experience, would tell one the same, for nature does not produce at the same period a

number of great men enough to comprehend all the abuses that ought to be corrected in any system, and at the same time to foresee the greater evils that would arise from various alterations, for good and evil are so intermixed in human affairs in a series of ages, that it would require the omnipotent hand of the Creator to separate the bran from the chaff; and since he has permitted the intermixture, and not revealed his secret, it becomes us, though bound to aim at the amendment of abuses, to proceed with diffidence and a timid hand. A presumptuous Alexander may cut a Gordian knot with his sword; and I wish it had never been worse occupied—but perhaps the poor knot hurt nothing but *his* pride; and to be sure his time would have been better employed in continuing to try to unravel it than in drawing his sword on any other occasion.

The Duke of Bedford * does me a great deal too much honour, madam; but I must believe that I am

* I cannot resist transcribing from the memoranda of Lord Ossory the following account of the death of Francis, Duke of Bedford, in 1802:—

"On February 27th, 1802, I went over to Woburn, hearing of the Duke of Bedford's dangerous illness. I had observed him unwell a few days before. There I found Dr. Kerr, who explained to me the great necessity and urgency of the case, as to the operation, which he seemed much inclined to undertake before the other surgeons arrived; but the inclination of the duke to wait, and other circumstances, caused it to be delayed until about half-past six o'clock. It was performed very successfully by Earle, but was found a bad case of the sort, complicated, the intestine much inflamed and discoloured. However, it was said, the next day, that things were in a better state than there was any right to expect; at least, I was told so by Halifax. However, I heard of a nausea that day, which gave me unfavourable presentiments. The progress of the disease was not favourable, and the symptoms were very bad on Monday morning, till twelve; from that time, till five or six, hopes began to revive; then they all vanished, and he was given over, and on

chiefly indebted to your ladyship's partiality, who have mentioned me too favourably in his hearing. If one is spoken of by friends, it is certainly with omission of one's faults, weaknesses, and deficiencies; and then how is the person to whom one has been commended, disappointed! One does not answer to the idea conceived, and all the defects surprise: but seriously madam, how could I, approaching seventy-four, lame, dining alone at a strange hour, with a decaying memory, or remembering nothing but old tales, unacquainted with the present world, and conversing only or but seldom with any but the few old acquaintance I have left, be fit company for the Duke of Bedford? I know myself too well to clog his grace's good nature

Monday morning, March the 2nd, about half-past eleven, he expired, in a manner, in Lord John's arms.

"Thus died Francis, Duke of Bedford, with a sort of similarity of fate to his father, both of whom I loved with much affection and attachment.

"The Duke of Bedford's energetic and capacious mind, his enlarged way of thinking, and elevated sentiments, together with the habits and pursuits of his life, peculiarly qualified him for his high station and princely fortune. He was superior to bad education and disadvantages for forming his character, and turned out certainly a first-rate man, though not free from imperfections. His uprightness and truth were unequalled; his magnanimity, fortitude and consideration, in his last moments, taken so unprepared as he was, were astonishing, and Dr. Kerr assured me, he never met with *such a man*, at *such a time*.

"To have lost such a relation,—whom I had known from his earliest years, and, in a manner, at that time, regarded as my son,—such a friend, and such a neighbour, makes a deep impression upon me; I can scarcely ride a mile about Ampthill, or any part of Bedfordshire, without seeing traces of his active spirit in improvements. To reflect that all this is swept away in a few days, and that he is this very day, March 11th, 1802, being carried to his grave, is like a dream. What a field for moralizing!"—Ed.

and good breeding; and as I have never done anything that can make it worth curiosity's while to see me once even in my decrepitude, I am content to live in the duke's good opinion only by the favourable opinion your ladyship has given him of me. The poor cross at Ampthill is very like me; it was small at first, a breath of wind has blown most of it away, only enough remains to preserve my name a little longer, and then the grass will cover us both.

LETTER CCCL.

Strawberry Hill, June 28, 1791, after dinner.

OUR post, madam, which only comes in, turns on its heel, and goes out again, made it impossible for me to answer your ladyship's letter before dinner, especially as I write with difficulty and very slowly, having such a rheumatism in my right shoulder and arm that I cannot lift it, scarcely upon the table: I have had a little of it the whole year; and, it being the way in this country to proclaim summer the moment the winter dies (though perhaps only dozing), people open their windows and keep them so till ten o'clock at night, pretending to be hot, and, it being my fate to meet with two such refreshing grottoes on Saturday night, I have not been able to move my arm since.

The escape of the King and Queen of France came merely time enough to double the shock of their being retaken. An ocean of pity cannot suffice to lament their miserable condition, of which I yet know no

particulars, nor more of their evasion than that it was by a subterraneous passage. Almost all the circumstances both of their flight and capture, which I heard from the French at Richmond, and they from their ambassador, I now hear, are disbelieved in London, particularly of Monsieur de Bouillé's two battalions having laid down their arms, which, indeed, would be a shocking example! How the tragedy is to end, or begin, it is impossible to guess. The only *data* yet are that the French are as insolent and cruel when possessed of force, as servile and crouching, and fawning, when slaves. Lord Frederick Cavendish two days ago was reading Barillon's letters from England: he tells somebody that he had been in the city *incog.* to see the Pope burnt on 5th of November; and adds, "not a drop of blood was shed. That would not have been the case at Paris."

One cannot think without horror of what the king and queen must have felt, from the moment of their being stopped till their re-entry into their prison, if they are suffered to arrive there; perhaps to see the last of one another, and of their children! They may have to feel, too, for the faithful assistants of their flight; all who did assist will certainly suffer, and many others, too, for all the real liberty given to France is, that anybody may hang anybody.

I have been very much with the wretched fugitives at Richmond! To them it is perfect despair; besides trembling for their friends at Paris!

To conjecture what will happen, or how, would be

foolish ; but these new events do not make me believe at all more in the duration of chaos, though they may protract it. I see nothing like system, and full as little, anything like a great man. The very impulse given by the flight and recapture of the King, must add vast fermentation to twenty millions of heads already turned; and much good may it do anybody who attempts to sober them! They can only be governed yet by indulging their exaltation. When the million are glutted with trampling on, murdering, and insulting their former superiors, they will grow tired of their present leaders, and hundreds will think they can govern as ably : in short, can such a convulsion and so total a change subside into a calm ? The more all are intoxicated with a total change, the more any deviation from totality will offend. The King, unhappily for him, has precipitated his own ruin, and probably his family's ; but I am far from clear that he has mended the situation of the National Assembly. They will think he has, and will be assuming, and the more power they assume the less they will care to part with it; though at the moment when others were expecting a new Assembly and hoping to be of it. Pray, madam, have you hitherto seen any grounds for believing that wisdom is the ruling character of the National Assembly ?

I have dipped into speculations, though I protested against them, and I have fatigued my arm before I could stop ; but I must now bid you good night, not being able to write a line more.

LETTER CCCLI.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 8, 1791.

I HAVE frequently been inclined to make Kirgate write a line for me, but reflected that I should only give your ladyship a little unnecessary concern, when I knew that patience would ere long enable me to write myself. It has delivered me from pain, but has left my arm so lame that I cannot lift it to the top of my head, nor write but slowly and with difficulty. I have made no vow against going to church; it is not so tempting since this last experience as to make it necessary to tie myself up. I have always gone now and then, though of late years rarely, as it was most unpleasant to crawl through a church-yard full of staring footmen and apprentices, clamber a ladder to a hard pew to hear the dullest of all things, a sermon, and croaking and squalling of psalms to a hand-organ by journeymen brewers and charity children. As I am to go soon to church for ever, I do not think it my duty to *try on* my death before hand. The truth is, madam, I am worn out, and little fit to go anywhere or do anything. I did two months ago begin on the "Woburn Catalogue," and out of one hundred articles got through forty; when I shall be able to finish the rest the Lord knows! for I can neither lift nor turn over folios of genealogies, for though I used to know who begat whom, like a chapter in Genesis, my mind is not so triflingly circumstantial now, and I might create scandal backwards two centuries ago.

To Mr. Burke's appeal, I answer, it is well and carefully written; but I think he had better not have wanted it, by accepting Mr. Fox's tender and handsome apology. For my own part, I had rather be entertained by anybody's imprudence than their discretion. If a man will be discreet, why write at all? How much more delightful are Mr. Burke's wit, similes, metaphors, and allusions and eccentricities, than his references to what he said in anno Domini one thousand seven hundred, &c.! I am most pleased with his slashing the French, and Paine, and the Presbytyrants, as Lord Melcombe called the Presbyterians. By the way, I am mighty glad to be mighty sorry for Dr. Priestly, as I am sure he is very sorry that he has no opportunity of being very glad for having occasioned fifty thousand times the mischief that has fallen on his own head; yet he might have saved his house, had he clapped Mr. Merry's Ode on it, that is cold enough to have quenched a volcano, and dull enough to be admired by the French Academy. Yes, madam, yes, by this time twelvemonth the immortal 14th of July may be buried with Voltaire at St. Genevieve, and the National Assembly too. I am sick of their puerility and pedantry; and yet I think they cannot be such egregious fools as they seem. Their most ridiculous debates must proceed from a kind of *finesse* to keep the people intoxicated with new visions, and to avoid settling anything that by finishing might put an end to their own eighteen livres a-day.

The Berrys are not expected before the end of Oc-

tober at soonest, and then, I trust, have no thoughts of coming through France. Your own journey, I hope, madam, is from no necessity of health. Your invitation would be both most agreeable, and I believe salutary for me; but I want resolution, and fancy I want so many other things, that I equally omit what I like and what would be of use to me. Having lost all manner of activity, I have been forced to discover, that total indolence is a comfortable succedaneum. Adieu, madam!—Yours, &c.

LETTER CCCLII.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 22, 1791.

No, madam, no, I am not so fractious as to quarrel with the civil things you are pleased to say to me. It is true I never had a taste for being complimented; but I don't know how, I am grown less mealy-eared: I suppose it is natural in old age; when one has lost any talent one may have been supposed to have, one may be fond of being told one retains it. Queen Elizabeth, when shrivelled like a morel, listened with complacency to encomiums on her beauty. I perhaps may soon flatter myself, when I cannot crawl, that I am as nimble as I was above fifty years ago, when Mr. Winnington told me I ran along like a pewet; but as to the *iron-head*, I still protest against it. I have said I have an *iron stomach*, and may say so still; but never did

I, nor can I allow the iron head. I know too well the slight and unconnected ingredients of which it is compounded!

With Mr. Burke's book I do not mean to find fault, but to distinguish between what delights me, and what I only respect. I adore *genius;* to *judgment* I pull off my hat, and make it a formal bow; but as I read only to amuse myself, and not to be informed or convinced, I had rather (for my private pleasure) that in his last pamphlet he had flung the reins on the neck of his boundless imagination, as he did in the first. *Genius* creates enthusiasts or enemies; *judgment* only cold friends; and cold friends will sooner go over to your enemies than to your bigots. As to Mr. Fox, I own I think the tears he shed for having hurt Mr. Burke, were an infinitely nobler peace-offering than a recantation could have been. Who weeps for his friend, feels; who retracts his opinion, may be convinced, or from art or interest may pretend he is convinced; and that recantation may be due to the public, without being due to his friend, as no friendship binds one to *think* exactly like one's friend on general topics; and therefore to shed tears for having disagreed, was a greater sacrifice than retractation: and in that light I admire Mr. Fox's temper more than Mr. Burke's. This is being very impartial; for though with Mr. Fox I admire the destruction of despotism, I agree with Mr. Burke in abhorring the violence, cruelty, injustice, and absurdity of the National Assembly, who have destroyed regal tyranny for a short time, and exercise ten times greater

themselves; and I fear have ruined liberty for ages; for what country will venture to purchase a chance of freedom at the price of the ruin that has been brought on France by this outrageous experiment.

I am the more impartial, madam (which I am not apt to be), as Mr. Burke has bribed me in the most welcome manner by his panegyric on my father; but I must speak as I think and have long thought, at least felt for many years. But I am a very timid politician; and though I detest tyranny, I never should have ventured to act against it at the expense of blood, as I am not clear that I am authorised to put a single man to death for the benefit of others. I am shocked to hear it said that the French Revolution has cost *very little* blood! and even that is false! Sure I am that the electors of the *Etats* gave them (and who but the whole nation could give?) no authority to shed a drop! If one of our juries should condemn a man to be hanged for what he deserved only to be set in the stocks, would not they commit murder? Have I a right, and whence, to take away any man's property, and allow myself eighteen livres a day out of it? Had the King of France less lawful right to grant parts of his own domains, than the Assembly have to take away those domains and share part of the income amongst themselves, and call it paying themselves for doing their duty in an Assembly, in which they have violated almost every duty they were sent to perform, and which duty they have protracted beyond the term for which they were sent to

perform it? Would my breaking my oath to my king authorize me to force others to break theirs and take contradictory oaths? And did their electors nominate them to impose a code of perjury on the whole nation, or strip men of their property for refusing to be perjured? And all this is called a Revolution in favour of liberty! The system, if it is one, is not a democracy, but a demonocracy, for it will sluice torrents of blood before it is settled, or overturned, which last will probably be its fate. James II. broke his coronation oath and the laws, and would have governed without a parliament. Louis XVI. restored the old constitutional parliaments, called the *Etats* to mend the constitution, and they have treated him worse than the worst of his predecessors whom they flattered and servilely obeyed! I do not admire Papal government; but when the National Assembly had overturned that usurpation, had they a right (after declaring for universal peace) to seize dominions of the Sovereign of Rome, which never belonged to France, and hang inhabitants of Avignon for not breaking their oaths to that sovereign; if the National Assembly did not order those murders, have they punished them or made any reparation to the families of the massacred? At least they do not take eighteen livres a day for doing justice!

P.S.—As I do not know whether your ladyship is set out for Eastbourne, or how to direct, if you are; I send this to Ampthill; it will always reach you time enough, for such commonplace requires no answer,

nor deserves any; but I know nothing newer, and perhaps have said the same things before. Our own Revolution, and that in Poland, shew that a country may be saved and a very bad government corrected, by wise and good men, without turning *the rights of men* into general injustice and ruin.

2nd P.S. I wrote this letter yesterday after dinner, to be ready for our early post to-day; and then went to the Duke of Queenberry's at Richmond, where were our French exiles, Madame du Barry, and some of the foreign ministers, and there I heard the following horrible demonocratic story, which came yesterday morning in a letter to George Pitt, from his mother, Lady Rivers, at Lyons, and for which I don't wonder she has determined to quit her house there and return to England. A young gentleman, who visited her, was seized by the demons, I do not know for what offence or suspicion, and was tied to a spit and roasted alive; nor was that all! They brought his mother to see that dreadful sight, and whipped her till she expired before he did. I would not relate such an incredible massacre without quoting my authority. If French kings have been tyrants, what are French people?

LETTER CCCLIII.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 8, 1791.

You stroke me with so caressing a hand, madam, that I repent having yielded to undertake the cata-

logue, for I now see that you expect something from it, and I am clear that it must disappoint you. Besides, I have been looking into Mr. Pennant's account, and find my notes were unnecessary, he having anticipated some of the same anecdotes that I have added, and which I believe he had from me several years ago, when he talked to me of a journey to Woburn, or, at least, which he could find too, where I found them. Indeed, with his usual hurry and unacquaintance with ancientry, he has made some blunders, with which I do not wish to charge myself. He ascribes the church of Covent Garden to the second duke, whom he takes for the first, and even then would not be right, for I conclude Earl Francis, who died in 1641, was the builder, as the church was probably not erected after the civil war began. I am quite innocent too, I assure you, madam, of calling Philip and Mary an *insipid* pair; nor had Mr. Pennant informed me that he proposed to give an account of the wild beasts in the Tower, should I have prompted him to remark, that a tiger and a hyæna are a couple of pretty playful animals. Still I think his list would have sufficed; and, had I turned to it before I had finished mine (as I did to look for Count Nassau, on whom I have got no information,) I certainly should have excused myself. I had exhausted in the "Royal and Noble Authors," what I had to say on some of the most entertaining characters, and on those I could not touch again. In short, your ladyship has drawn me into a little scrape, and dis-

appointment will be your reward, for you will find but a very poor performance. It is ready, such as it is, and shall be sent to you whither you please, and by what conveyance you shall direct; but, for mercy's sake, do not let the Duke of Bedford suppose he owes me any thanks; he might as well think himself obliged to his frame-maker for cleaning a few old frames of some of his family pictures, and writing their names in a modern hand. Even his grace's housekeeper will acquire no new erudition from me; and can you really expect any entertainment from a starved vocabulary of names, for which I have done little more than transcribe the catalogue itself, and some facts in the duke's genealogy in the "Peerage?" My precursor, Pennant, may have tripped, but he is much more lively.

I don't know that I am glad, madam, of Mr. Fitzpatrick's taking to botany. Though I dare to say that he is more entertaining from the cedar to the hyssop than Linnæan Solomon himself (who, though he wrote as high seasoned verses as Mr. Fitzpatrick, yet had not so much wit), yet I do not know that I shall be the better for his lectures; and who wishes a poet to amuse himself without wishing to be amused by him? Mr. Gray, often vexed me by finding him heaping notes on an interleaved "Linnæus," instead of pranking on his lyre. Dr. Darwin, indeed, the sublime, the divine, has poured all the powers of poetry into the flower-garden, and as he has immortalised all the intrigues of the lady-plants, who have as many gentlemen of the bed-

chamber (by herbalists called *Husbands*) as the northern empress: why should not Mr. Fitzpatrick versify the amours of trees who, are as busy with the two genders as we Christians? I only suggest this, not that I am at all a botanist myself; even my passion for flowers lies chiefly in my nose: I care much more for their odours than for their hues or for the anatomy of their pistils.

On France, it is true, madam, I am silent, and *wait for the echo.* I am no cylinder to draw chaos into a regular figure. No God has yet said, *Let there be light!* A pack of pedants are going to be replaced by a pack of cobblers and tinkers, and confusion will be worse confounded. I should understand the Revelations or guess the number of the beast, as soon as conjecture what is to ensue in that country. Till anarchy has been bloodied down to a *caput mortuum*, there can be no settlement, for all will be struggling different ways, when all ideas have been disjointed and overturned; no great bodies can find their account, and no harmonious system is formed that will be for the interest either of the whole or of individuals. Even they who would wish to support what they now call a constitution, will be perpetually counteracting it, as they will be endeavouring to protract their own power, or to augment their own fortunes—probably both; and since a latitude has been thrown open to every man's separate ideas, can one conceive that unity or union can arise out of such a mass of discord? But it is idle to pretend to foresee what I shall not live to

see; besides, foresight guesses backwards from what has happened, not forwards, futurity *sans* inspiration giving prophets no ground to stand on. All France is turned into legislators; no ordinance is obeyed but that of the *lanterne*, and that supreme will forbids any redress for any injury. Unwilling as I am to prognosticate, can one help asking how long such a dispensation can endure?—Could it last, it must reduce the country to a desert, or to a worse state of barbarism than can be supposed ever to have existed, even if the globe was peopled progressively. The earliest bodies of savages were too much occupied by their daily wants not to attempt mending their condition by degrees, and saw no neighbours in a situation to be envied or to be worth invading. Four and twenty millions of civilised people suddenly converted into savages, know what they envied, coveted—and accordingly have levelled everything they could, not to keep anything on a level, but first to exercise power, and then to engross what each man's secret heart told him, at least made him hope would be the consequence of enjoying power. One instance will serve for thousands, —Monsieur Condorcet, Dr. Priestly's consolatory correspondent, has got a place in the treasury, of 1,000*l.* a-year.—Adieu, madam; I doubt I have not been so silent on France as I announced!

P.S.—The Berrys are set out on their return, and I hope will be in England by the middle of next month.

On the Blandford match, madam, I shall certainly not be diffuse, being perfectly indifferent about two

young persons whom I never saw, and with whom I have no connection: yet it has made much buzz among many, who have no more to do with it than I have, and who consequently if they pleased might care as little.

LETTER CCCLIV.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 30, 1791.

I HAVE been ashamed to write to your ladyship till I could tell you that I have finished the notes to the Duke of Bedford's pictures; I stayed at home all yesterday evening to make an end; but alas! madam, though I have been so tedious, if your partiality for me has raised any expectation of amusement in the duke, his grace will be piteously disappointed; of which I warned your ladyship before I undertook the task in the execution of which I have no kind of merit but obedience. Age has not left me even the ardour of a genealogist, though it requires nothing but perseverance, and rheumatism cripples even that. Well, I will say no more of my tasks and my defects. Another damper was that some of the portraits are of persons so well known that it would have been tautology to dwell on them; and others so forgotten that I have been able to find no memorials of them. Of none of them are the painters named. I remember two curious pictures (but know not which they are in this list, as there are several duplicates of the same persons) which the first time I was at Woburn the Duchess of Bedford told me

were two sons of the second earl, and that from their story the subject of the "Orphan" was taken. They were two young men, less than life, I think, with emblems, and in one of the pictures was a lady in a maze. Did you ever hear of that anecdote, madam, and can you tell me more of it?

Well! I said I had done my work, and now I will have it transcribed fair and transmit it to your ladyship; but you must not expect it incontinently, for poor Kirgate is shaking in bed with an ague and fever, and nobody else can read my sketches, when I am putting together things of this sort with twenty books on the table, and abbreviate words so, that they are rather memorandums than sentences, and sometimes I have difficulty to make them out myself.

Not knowing whether you are at Ampthill or Farming-Woods, I direct to the former as the more secure conveyance, and having satisfied my conscience by declaring my task done, it is of no consequence if you do not receive my notification this week.

I have seen Arundel Castle, which your ladyship mentioned in your last. It is a nothing on a fine hill. The old duke told me the castle had been *haunted* by a giant, and did not know that that giant was Oliver Cromwell!

I have scarce a newer anecdote to send you, madam, but that *old* Q. presented Madame du Barry to the king on the terrace at Windsor, and the King of England did not turn the same side that the late King of France used to turn to her, but the reverse, as he told

Lord Onslow himself. It was a strange oblivion of etiquette in an *ancien gentilhomme de la chambre*, and more so in one dismissed!

I have to the last drop of my pen been your ladyship's most obedient, but, indeed, now can only be your most humble servant.

LETTER CCCLV.

Berkeley Square, Oct. 26, 1791.

YOUR ladyship is very gracious about the catalogue, as I knew you would be, when you had commanded it; but I disclaim all merit but obedience, which, we are told, is better than sacrifice, but which in this case was the same thing, as nobody could have less taste for the task, nor less satisfaction in the execution. There are but two articles at all curious, and those not new; yet, by collecting scattered incidents, and putting them together, Christian, Countess of Devonshire, appears to me to have been a remarkable personage; and by the same kind of assemblage I was pleased to find, what I had not observed before, that the Lord Russell in the double portrait with Lord Digby, became so long afterwards the first Duke of Bedford, and consequently was concerned in both those memorable periods, the Civil War and the Revolution. Genealogy and pedigrees thus become useful in the study of history, if the study itself of history is useful, which I doubt, considering how little real truth it communicates, and

how much falsehood it teaches us to believe. Indeed, considering how very little truth we can glean from the study of anything, I question whether there is any other good in what is called learning, than its enabling us to converse on an equal footing with those who think they possess knowledge, because they have acquainted themselves with the imperfect scraps of what passes for science.

I thank your ladyship for correcting my blunder about the Queen of Bohemia, which shews how little I have profited by studying genealogy, or that I have lost my memory, which I rather believe the case, as I think in the very same article I have alluded to James I. as that queen's father, and therefore did know what I forgot the next minute.

My little spurt of gout, I thank you, madam, is gone, but the inflammation on my arm not quite, and it keeps me still in town; yet I hope to get away in a day or two.

My servant's death was shocking indeed, and incomprehensively out of proportion to his fault, and to the slight notice taken of it; and that gentle treatment is my consolation, as I had in nowise contributed to, nor could foresee nor prevent his sad catastrophe!

Your ladyship's most devoted, &c.

LETTER CCCLVI.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 23, 1791.

Your ladyship, I am sure, will excuse my silence, when you hear in what distress I have been from a new fit of frenzy of Lord Orford, attended by total insensibility, and so violent a fever, that from seven o'clock on Friday evening, when Dr. Monro, whom I had sent down to him, returned, I had dreaded an express with an account of his death, till the post came in very late on Monday; nor should I have known a syllable of his disorder and danger, had not Lord Cadogan, who lives in the neighbourhood, sent me word of it; the persons in the house, with Lord Orford and his servants, totally concealing his situation from me, and from both his steward and his lawyer in town, who knew it not but from me; though a mad keeper had been sent for privately to an apothecary in St. Alban's Street. This is a new instance of the treatment I have received in return for and ever since all the torment and trouble I had; and for all the care, attention and tenderness I twice exerted during his fits of lunacy, and in recovering and restoring him from which I was fortunately rewarded by success. Thank God, I have the comfort of seeing the tranquillity of the end of my days renewed, for the fever is in a manner gone, and his senses so far returned, that I conclude it will again be said, as it has been the fashion to say, "that he is as well as ever he was;" and in *one sense* that may be true!

I beg your pardon, madam, for this tedious apology, but when so injuriously and disgracefully treated, and still more, with such gross injustice, for if ever I had merit in any part of my life, it has been in my care of Lord Orford, can I be totally silent to those who wish me well? And when I can produce proofs of a long list of such services, pains and acts of the strictest honour and integrity as few uncles or trustees I believe could equal, is it not hard, madam, to be treated by my lord's intimates as if I had bad designs, though when twice in my power for months, I alone directed the management and unparalleled tender treatment of him; and to be used by him after both his recoveries as a total stranger and alien, and mocked by an annual present of two boxes of pewet's eggs, with a line and a half *in his own hand* on a folio sheet, simply notifying the donation? I call them his quit-rents; they are his only acknowledgment of my existence. But I have done and will tire your ladyship no more on that subject, which, for my own peace, too, I will forget as much as I can.

The Duke of Bedford is too gracious, madam, in being pleased to say he is content with my meagre account of his pictures, which do not deserve the honour of a visit from his grace; but may I say he would oblige me by lending me for a very few days the small portrait of Christian, Countess of Devonshire, which shall be returned carefully without delay. A friend of mine, Mr. Lysons, a clergyman, is writing a history of the villages for ten miles round London,

with an account of the churches, monuments, chief houses, and remarkable inhabitants that have lived or are buried in each; with some views and plates, two or three of which I shall contribute. Lady Devonshire will be one, if the duke will allow a drawing to be taken from it, for it shall not be detained for the engraver.

Thank your ladyship for the verses you inclosed, though I had seen both copies before; the duke's are the best, for, though not harmonious, they are simple and natural. The other lines are not Lady Spencer's, but her mother's Lady Lucan, who repeated them to me herself some time ago.

Dr. Robertson's book amused me pretty well, madam, though very defective from the hiatuses in his materials. It is a genealogy with more than half the middle descents wanting; and thence his ingenious hypothesis of western invaders importing civilization from the east is not ascertained. Can one be sure a peer is descended from a very ancient peer of the same name, though he cannot prove who a dozen of his grandfathers were? Dr. Robertson shone when he wrote the history of his own country, with which he was acquainted. All his other works are collections, tacked together for the purpose; but as he has not the genius, penetration, sagacity, and art of Mr. Gibbon, he cannot melt his materials together, and make them elucidate and even improve and produce new discoveries; in short, he cannot, like Mr. Gibbon, make an *original* picture with some bits of Mosaic.

The doctor, too, has let himself build on that trifling saying of "the cradle of science." I told him so in my answer when he sent me his book, and that if the east were the cradle of science, at least it had never got out of its nursery. It might invent a horn-book; did it ever arrive at a grammar?

I certainly, madam, am not able to tell you a tittle more of the Duchess of York, than the newspapers tell you and me; nor do I know what truths or lies they tell. I have been entirely shut up with my own family since Lord Orford's illness, receiving and writing letters, &c. I have scarce any other acquaintance in town, and have outlived most of those I had. Nor, though I abhor the French for all their savage barbarities, condemn them for missing so favourable an opportunity of obtaining a good, free, and durable constitution; and despise them for their absurdities, that are both childish and pedantic; I am not grown a whit more in love with princes and princesses than I ever was, nor have any curiosity about them. I do not dislike kings, or nobility, or people, but as human creatures that, when possessed of full power, scarce ever fail to abuse it; and, therefore, each description ought to be chained in some degree, or made counterpoisons to one another, as we, *by an unique concurrence of accidents*, are in this country.

There, madam! I send you grievances, complaints, criticisms, and opinions, all eccentric perhaps; but I was glad to turn the stream of my thoughts into any new cut, and am more glad to find that I can do it so

easily ; an earnest of my soon becoming as indifferent to my vexations, as I was before the sore was opened again. Oh ! I this moment recollect to tell your ladyship that Lady Craven received the news of her lord's death on a Friday, went into weeds on Saturday, and into white satin, and *many* diamonds, on Sunday, and in that vestal trim was married to the Margrave of Anspach by my cousin's chaplain, though he and Mrs. Walpole excused themselves from being present. The bride excused herself for having *so few* diamonds; they had been the late Margravine's, but she is to have many more, and will soon set out for England, where they shall astound the public by living in a style of magnificence unusual, as they are richer than anybody in this country. The Dukes of Bedford, Marlborough, and Northumberland, may hide their diminished rays!

LETTER CCCLVII.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 10, 1791.

YOUR ladyship has so long accustomed me to your goodness and partiality, that I am not surprised at your being kind on an occasion that is generally productive of satisfaction. That is not quite the case with me. Years ago, a title would have given me no pleasure, and at any time the management of a landed estate, which I am too ignorant to manage, would have been a burthen. That I am now to possess, should it prove a considerable acquisition to

my fortune, which I much doubt, I would not purchase at the rate of the three weeks of misery which I have suffered, and which made me very ill, though I am now quite recovered. It is a story much too full of circumstances, and too disagreeable to me to be couched in a letter; some time or other I may perhaps be at leisure and composed enough to relate in general. —At present I have been so overwhelmed with business that I am now writing these few lines as fast I can, to save the post, as none goes to-morrow, and I should be vexed not to thank your ladyship and Lord Ossory by the first that departs. As, however, I owe it to you and to my poor nephew, I will just say that I am perfectly content. He has given me the whole Norfolk estate, heavily charged, I believe, but that is indifferent. I had reason to think that he had disgraced, by totally omitting me—but unhappy as his intellects often were, and beset as he was by miscreants, he has restored me to my birth-right, and I shall call myself obliged to him, and be grateful to his memory, as I am to your ladyship, and shall be as I have so long been, your devoted servant, by whatever name I may be forced to call myself.*

LETTER CCCLVIII.

Dec. 26, 1791.

YOUR ladyship is, as usual, ever kind to me. My mistership, I believe, would have been very well if I

* No signature in the MS.—ED.

could have preserved it, but the lordship and its train of troubles have half killed me. I have had a week's gout, but it is gone, and so far comforts me, as, had I had much about me, I am sure it would have been produced by all the trouble and fatigue I have undergone; nor have I strength or spirits to combat all I have to come. I have not yet been able to go out of my house to return visits, but as I am never called *My lord* but I fancy I have got a bunch on my back, I must go and leave my hump at fifty doors.

I have detained your ladyship's servant from various interruptions, and here is the post from Norfolk arrived with letters that I probably must answer directly, or at midnight, when my company is gone. In short, my tranquillity is gone, and my voice almost also; and as Kirgate is grown deafish, it is even less fatigue to write myself than to dictate to him; and all these miseries must excuse the shortness of this.

LETTER CCCLIX.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 18, 1792.

I RETURN your ladyship the verses, with my thanks; Lord Holland's are very easy, and the Round-Robin lively and clever. I inclose them as you order, with my signature, that title that has produced so much trouble to me, and made me be accused of both vanity and affected humility, though my disgust arose from mortified pride, as might easily have been guessed,

if they, who like to censure, would give themselves the trouble to judge. I was rich as a commoner, for I was always content with my fortune, even when I had lost 1,400*l.* a year by my brother Sir Edward's death: I am not vain of being the poorest earl in England, nor delighted to have outlived all my family, its estate, and Houghton, which, while it was *complete*, would have given me so much pleasure; now I will only be a mortifying ruin, which I will never see. To this prospect are thrown in several spiteful acts executed by my poor nephew to injure me, yet I do not impute them to him, for I have even learnt some instances which shew he had principles. But having never been sound in his senses, it exposed him to the successive influence of a vile set of miscreants, who, to estrange him from me, had persuaded him that I wanted to shut him up; or worse, though I had twice for fifteen, and then for twelve months, had him entirely in my power, and had treated him both times with a care and tenderness unknown in those cases; the fatal consequence to him, poor soul! has been, that under pretence of removing him from the reach of my talons, they hurried him, in the height of a putrid fever, to Houghton, though he complained and begged to stop on the road, but was not allowed, relays being laid on the road for him; his sweats were stopped, and never returned! Had they been less precipitate, and however they have aspersed me, I will not return it, nor suspect them of killing him intentionally, which was not their interest; but there are proofs of such tam-

pering about *wills*, of which one of the actors has, by a letter, offered to inform me, that had the poor man not been dispatched so suddenly, the mere title had probably been all my lot, as for three days I concluded it was, on the report of one who, it seems, knew only what was intended, and thought executed.

Thus, madam, I have troubled you with a *little* more of my present history, which I have ventured, because by your scratching under *little*, I concluded you thought I had mentioned too little. Secrets indeed, I have none; but family histories that interest nobody but one's self, are commonly tedious; and perhaps this, amounting to a whole page, may prove so too; but you shall have no more; though as almost all my mornings are engrossed by the consequences of my nephew's death, I have little leisure for anything I like, or to learn anything that can amuse others. The Pantheon was burnt, and my last sealed and gone to the post before I heard of that calamity: how fortunate, that two theatres should have been burnt in so very few years, and neither during any performance! I do not, however, intend to pass my remnant of time with lawyers and stewards; and as soon as the executors have finished, or settled their operations, I hope to fall again into my old train, and amuse myself with more agreeable trifles than business, for which I have no talent; and it is too late for me to learn the multiplication table. I have only to guard against my titularity drawing me into any debts or distresses that may intrench on my private fortune, which I have

destined and appropriated to those who will want it, or miss me; and this is so sacred a point with me, that I made a resolution not to add a shilling of expense to my ordinary way of life, till at a year's end I shall see in a banker's hands, what addition there will be to my usual income. Till then I shall, in the loo-phrase, pass eldest, nor play without pam in my hand.

LETTER CCCLX.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 14, 1792.

As your ladyship and Lord Ossory have been so good as to send your servant to inquire after me, I can do no less to save you such trouble, than tell you myself that I am in a moment of prettywellness, and have been able to return the visits of ceremony on my new christening; and last night, as befits children at Christmas, was carried to the pantomime of "Cymon," of which I was as tired as formerly in my middle age, for it is only Garrick's ginger-bread double-gilt. I know nothing else that will make a paragraph, for I will not talk of my own trist affairs, which take up my whole time, and present little but scenes of mortification, with which I have no right and no wish to trouble anybody else: but as I neither sought my present situation, nor certainly deserved it should be so bad, I can remain in the state that suited me, and that I had chalked out for myself and enjoyed; and shall

not let an event that I could not nor was suffered to prevent, disturb my peace, nor make the least alteration in my plan of living for the little time I may have to come. I cannot help my name being changed; it shall change nothing else.

LETTER CCCLXI.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 4, 1792.

I OWE your ladyship a debt of thanks for Lord Holland's prologue and epilogue, which I liked; but having nothing new to tell you, I waited for some supply; and now Lord Ossory is come to town and will intercept not only my lean gazette, but will bring you all the flower of St. James's-street, and of the *two houses* which, whatever they may think of themselves, are but the first coffee-houses of the day, and supply the others during the season with their daily bread, and are forgotten the moment their ovens cease to be heated.

Your ladyship mentions France, which is so truly contemptible, that I neither read nor inquire about it. Who can care for details of a mob? It will be time enough to know what mischief it has done when it shall be dispersed. That scribbling trollop Madame de Sillery, and the viper that has cast his skin, the Bishop of Autun are both here, but I believe, little noticed; and the woman and the serpent I hope, will find few disposed to taste their rotten apples: if Bishop Watson

would *pair off* with the prelate, one should have no objection.

Lord Ossory flatters me with hopes of seeing your ladyship soon.

LETTER CCCLXII.

Berkeley Square, April 10, 1792.

KIRGATE orders me to tell your ladyship that his master is mending as fast, or rather, as slowly, as the latter expected, who not being quite arrived at that miraculous age when people shoot out new hair and teeth, he does not reckon upon more than recovering some limbs and joints, that at their best are of very little use to him.

Confining my ambition to my very limited prospect, I do hope, madam, to be as well again in health as I was last autumn—weaker probably, for every fit must weaken; but my iron stomach that has stood unhurt so many attacks, seems as if it would hold out till it has nothing left to defend but itself. I believe I shall be able to eat and sleep when I have no other faculties of a living animal; and were it not for that impertinent gadfly, Memory, the state would not be uncomfortable—many an alderman has been content with it—why should not I?

I know no news, madam; there has not been a king murdered these two days, but the Jacobins promise themselves good sport yet!

It is observable that philosophy in three years has

made more horrid strides towards the most shocking crimes and barbarities than the blindest enthusiasm did in some centuries!

LETTER CCCLXIII.

April 30, 1792.

I RETURN your ladyship the print, which I flattered myself, as you said, you would call for.

I was very sorry to be out when Lord Ossory and Mr. Johns called. I was gone to take the air for the second time, but was so fatigued, that I believe it is in vain to struggle, and therefore if they are so good as to call again, they will probably find the remains of

Your most devoted ORFORD.*

LETTER CCCLXIV.

May 22, 1792.

I AM doubly sorry, madam, to hear your ladyship has been out of order, and that I missed the honour of seeing you before you go. I was trying change of air too; but I hope, as is most probable, that you will find it much more rapidly beneficial than I have done, who at most gain symptoms of amendment.

Should I hear any news before the newspaper, you shall know, or shall allow Kirgate to tell you, for my pen is as lame as its master, and likes as little to move.

* His first titled signature in the MSS.—ED.

LETTER CCCLXV.

Monday 14th.

I HAVE been much mortified, madam, that when your ladyship has done me the honour of calling on me, there has been company with me. That I fear will generally be the case from half an hour after one till four, which is high tide at my coffee-house. Your ladyship objects to the evening, though except Mr. Churchill and my sister, and Mr. Conway and Lady Ailesbury, I do not know six persons who ever do come to me in an evening, and they come very rarely indeed; but I will not presume to dictate to your ladyship, and submit to my lot, as I am forced to do in every thing else.

LETTER CCCLXVI.

From the House that Jack built,
Childernmass-day.

MADAM,

BY the Dunstable coach I make bold to send your ladyship the raw head and bloody bones of the only giant I have killed this season, very few having come over this year on account of the scarcity and dearness of provisions; besides that a whole flock has gone to St. Petersburg to recruit the empress's menagerie, since the disgrace of the Orlows: so that indeed I have had very little sport, and have only kept my hand in practice by shooting at flights of ostriches as they sat on the roof of our barn. We have no news, please your

ladyship, but that Tom Hickathrift has had two children in a wood by Patient Grizzel; and that Tom Thumb has betted a thousand pounds that he rides three horses at once next Newmarket meeting. Mother Goose begs her duty; poor soul, she is nothing the woman she was; in my mind, madam, Charlotte Edwin, the old Scotch-woman that says nothing but "*waal! waal! what do you tall one now?*" is full as good company; so no more from your ladyship's poor

Beadsman and Game-keeper,

JACK THE GIANT-KILLER.

LETTER CCCLXVII.

Berkeley Square, May 29, in the morning.

I RETURNED from Strawberry too late yesterday, madam, to answer your ladyship's letter incontinently, and this morning I was hindered by business and company; but my gratitude is not cooled by being postponed. I am indeed much obliged for the transcript of the letter on my "Wives." Miss Agnes has a *finesse* in her eyes and countenance that does not propose itself to you, but is very engaging on observation, and has often made herself preferred to her sister, who has the most exactly fine features, and only wants colour to make her face as perfect as her graceful person; indeed neither has good health nor the air of it. Miss Mary's eyes are grave, but she is not so herself; and, having much more application than her sister, she converses readily, and with great intelligence, on all subjects.

Agnes is more reserved, but her compact sense very striking, and always to the purpose. In short, they are extraordinary beings, and I am proud of my partiality for them, and since the ridicule can only fall on me, and not on them, I care not a straw for its being said that I am in love with one of them—people shall choose which: it is as much with both as either, and I am infinitely too old to regard the *qu'en dit on.*

I know not a word of politics, madam, except seeing with horror that the cowardly cannibals, as their own La Fayette calls his countrymen, and he is no democrat, are driving on the murder of their King and Queen; and the Duke of Brunswick, I fear, will not be at Paris in time to prevent it. Another of their philosophic legislators—I forget the wretch's name—told the King lately, that he ought to have two chaplains about him. "I mean for the look of it," said he, "for I am atheist myself, and do not mind those things;" no, nor assassination, nor any crime and injustice that human depravity can engender in the mind. They are going to empty their land of the nonjuring clergy, and will leave it, as it deserves to be, a *repaire* of wild beasts.

Fortune, that now and then seems to lift up a corner of the bandage over her eyes, played a malicious trick yesterday. There was a little lottery of French porcelain and millinery drawn at Lady Cecilia Johnston's, at a guinea a ticket, and no blanks. Lady Anne Lambton drew a *bonnet aristocrat* (so marked), stamped with *fleurs de lis* and *Vive le Roi.*

Pray, madam, let me have early notice of your return, for I shall leave town on Thursday se'nnight.

LETTER CCCLXVIII.

Strawberry Hill, June 27, 1792.

THE wet and cold weather has so retarded my recovery, madam, that if Strawberry had had a dry thread to its back, and I had not been so unwell ever since I came hither, I should have proposed to your ladyship and Lord Ossory to honour me with a visit—yet though that eternal weeper the month of June has certainly done me no good, I need not look beyond myself to account for my weakness. Almost half a century of gout, with the addition of a quarter of one, would undermine a stronger frame than mine; and if I live to have another fit, it will probably for the remnant confine me to my own house. As I can but just creep about, I have less reason than most people now to complain of the climate; and as I love to find out consolations, I have discovered that Nature, as a compensation, has given us verdure and coal-mines in lieu of summer; and, as I can afford to keep a good fire, and have a beautiful view from my window, why should I complain? I do not wish to amble to Ham Common and be disappointed of a pastoral at Mrs. Hobart's. Poor lady! She has already miscarried of two *fêtes* of which she was big, and yet next minute she was pregnant of another. Those *fausses couches* and Mrs. Jordan's epistle to her, and daily as well as nightly

robberies, have occasioned as much cackling in this district as if a thousand hen-roosts had been disturbed at once. Three coaches coming in society, with a horseman besides, from the play at Richmond, were robbed last week by a squadron of seven foot-pads, close to Mr. Cambridge's. If some check is not put to the hosts of banditti, Mr. T. Paine will soon be able to raise as well disciplined an army as he could wish. But how can I talk even of the outrages that one foresees in speculation, when one reads the recent accounts of those of the Tuileries! What barbarity in the monsters of Paris not at once to massacre the king and queen, who have suffered a thousand deaths for three years together, trembling for themselves, for their children, and for each other! I almost hate the Kings of Hungary and Prussia as much as the detestable Jacobins do, for not being already at the gates of Paris —ay, and while they suffer those wretches to exist, for conniving at the Tisiphone of the North! They tolerate a diabolic anarchy, and countenance the destruction of the most amiable and most noble of all revolutions that ever took place. How can one make an option between monarchs and mobs!

Well! with all my lofty airs, so little is my mind, madam, that I can turn from horror at mighty convulsions to indignation at puny spite and vulgar malice. How contemptible is the National Assembly! Not content with annihilating, vilifying, plundering and driving away their nobility, they have wreaked their paltry spleen on the title deeds and genealogies of the

old families, and deprived the exiles of the miserable satisfaction of knowing who were their ancestors. Yet it will not surprise me if, as after burning the Bastille, they have crammed Orleans with state prisoners, they should turn the galleys into a herald's office, and, like Cromwell, create Hewson the cobbler, and such heroes, dukes and peers!

Thursday.

I was interrupted yesterday, madam, and am now going to London, not as you kindly advise, because Berkeley-square is wholesomer than the country (for *to-day* the weather is brave and shining, and what for want of sterling summer, one may call—almost—hot); but to receive money; which I have not done yet from my estate, or rather for selling one; out of the wreck of my nephew's fortune. Some lands that he had bought in the Fens, to *adorn* the parsonage-hovel that he inhabited at Eriswell, escaped and fell to me—by not being entailed, or pocketed, or remembered, and I have sold them for two thousand guineas. This will not enrich me, but will pay a fine for church lands that I must renew, in addition to the incumbrances charged on me for repayment of my own fortune and my brother's: the latter of which I certainly did not receive, nor either of us either, till precisely forty years after they had been bequeathed! How little did I think of ever being master of fen-lands and church-lands, the latter of which I always abominated, and did not covet the former! I betray my ignorance in figures and calculations on every transaction; but thank my stars, can

laugh at myself, as much as I suppose my lawyers and agents do at me, especially when I tell them I care not how little I receive, provided my new wealth does not draw my private fortune into debt, which I have destined to those who will want it; and therefore I still crawl about with my pair of horses, and will not add a postilion, till at the end of the year I shall know whether I really am to receive anything or not. This is the sum of my worldly prudence, madam, and I am as indifferent about the balance of the estate, as I was about the title of (though not of being your ladyship's ever devoted servant,) ORFORD.

LETTER CCCLXIX.

Strawberry Hill, July 7, 1792.

I AM bound to thank your ladyship for recommending the baths of Lisbon to me; but, ah! madam, it is too late for Æson to try a new kettle! I cannot encounter the trouble and ennui of such a voyage, nor sacrifice six months, that I may possibly possess in tolerable comfort, for the chance of adding to my tattered rags of life half an ell more.

So we are forced to rejoice at Lord Cornwallis's victory over Tippoo!—for we have usurped India till it is become part of our vitals, and we can no more afford to part with it than with a great artery;—and yet one has the assurance to rail at the grand usurperess, who would sluice all the veins of Europe and Asia to add another chapter to her murderous history.

Well! if she dies soon, she will find the river Styx turned to a torrent of blood of her shedding! What! are there no *poissardes* at Petersburg? Are they afraid of a greater fury than themselves?—Or, don't they venerate her, because she is a Mirabeau in petticoats, and execrable enough to be a queen to their taste?

You will smile, madam, when I tell you that t'other day I received a letter from a gentleman of the society to propose to me to continue my nephew's subscription to *Hawking* in Norfolk. If the Antiquarian Society would have engaged me in such a truly noble Gothic institution, I should have wondered less: I am well read in Juliana Barnes's "Boke of St. Albans," and know I am entitled to be drawn with a hawk on my fist to mark my nobility; but not being much versed in the practical part of the science, I shall decline enrolling myself in the band of Falconers, till I have sued for seisin of my other baronial and manorial honours, which I have suffered to lie dormant, not being hitherto worth a knight's fee—nor, in truth, having ever ambitioned to be more than what I have been for above forty years, a burgess of Twickenham, and a retainer of the honour of Ampthill, and consequently

Your ladyship's poor beadsman, the late H. W.

P.S. I have this moment received a letter from Lady Waldegrave, acquainting me with one she has just had from Lord Cornwallis, expressing his affectionate remembrance of his great friend her lord, and assuring her that for his sake he will, while he lives, perform every office of friendship and assistance in his

power to her and her children. How very amiable in the moment of victory to find Alexander, the conqueror of India, thinking of writing a consolatory letter to a widow at the other end of the world, and tying up a branch of cypress with a bundle of laurels and boughs of olive!

LETTER CCCLXX.

Strawberry Hill, July 17, 1792.

THE "Memoirs*," about which your ladyship inquires, are probably those of a Lady Fanshaw, wife, if I do not mistake, of a Sir Richard Fanshaw, who, if I do not again mistake, died Minister in Spain. They were shewn to me a few years ago, and I had been told they were very curious, which was a little more than I found them, though not unentertaining; they chiefly dwelt on private domestic distresses, and on what the aristocrats of that time were apprehending from their enemies, who, however, were not such tigers and hyænas as the French of this day. Still so few private letters of the civil war from 1640 to 1660 have been preserved, probably from the fears of both writers and receivers, that one likes to read any details.

The letter pretended to be written by my father to the late King, advising a peerage to be conferred on Mr. Pulteney, I am thoroughly convinced, is spurious; the length alone would be suspicious—but I have better

* These memoirs have since been published under the editorship of Sir Harris Nicolas.

detection to offer. I was alone with Sir Robert when he came from St. James's the last time he saw George II., and when he had advised the peerage in question, of which he told me, and I have not forgotten the action of his hand, which he turned as when one locks a door, adding, "I have shut the door on him." Pulteney had gobbled the honour, but perceived his error too late, for the very first day that he entered the House of Lords he dashed his patent on the floor in a rage, and vowed he would never take it up; but it was too late—he had kissed the King's hand for it!

I am going to add two or three other paragraphs on another article of the "European Magazine," that suggested your ladyship's inquiries, but on a much more insignificant subject, myself. You may find there a letter signed "Scrutator," repeated from one printed in the "Cambridge Chronicle." Both affirm a most gross falsehood, viz., that I have denied having ever written to Chatterton. Had I done so, I must have been delirious, must have wantonly given myself the lie at the very moment that my veracity was proved. I had affirmed in my *printed* defence that I had answered his first letter. The lad's mother died last autumn, and in her custody was found that answer, which some of the lad's partizans printed. I had kept no copy, but it perfectly agreed with my account, and I am persuaded was genuine. A few months afterwards, in a subsequent Magazine, appeared a letter signed by a barbarous name, maintaining that I had desired my friends to declare that I never had answered

a letter of Chatterton. This was too absurd to deserve notice; but Dr. Farmer, without the smallest connection with me, published a few lines shewing the impossibility that I could ever have expressed such a desire, so destructive of my own cause and credit, and hinting a very just suspicion of the unknown letterwriter, who, I have no doubt, was the same person as "Scrutator," and invented the first falsehood as a ground for the second, choosing to confound two facts that had not the least relation to each other, and which stood thus. Poor Barrett, author of the "History of Bristol," printed there two letters to me found among Chatterton's papers, and which the simple man imagined the lad had sent to me, but most assuredly never did, as too preposterous even for him to venture, after he had found that I began to suspect his forgeries; for instance, he had ascribed the invention of heraldry to Hengist, and of painted glass to an unknown monk in the reign of King Edmund. On seeing those marvellous productions, I wrote to Dr. Lort declaring I never had received those two letters, and begging he would affirm so. This denial is now converted into a denial of a letter I did write, and have declared I did; and for all this blundering and incredible falsehood I am persuaded I am obliged to Dr. Glynn, an old doting physician and Chattertonian at Cambridge. But I have too much contempt both for him and anonymous writers, who, by concealing themselves, betray a consciousness of guilt, to make any reply, though I am persuaded that a farther forgery hereafter is meditated,

by the pains that have been taken to bolster up the present plan by authenticating my handwriting before a notary public, though I certainly never denied it, and do believe it mine, though I have not seen it, by its agreeing with my own account of the substance. What solemn folly! what transparent artifice! but, as my kind letter of advice to Chatterton was probably found too among the lad's papers, and is *not* published, though I have demanded it should be, I conclude it is meant, when I shall be no more, to produce a forged one of no kind complexion. But who will believe it mine? I don't say but those who forge it will assert their belief of it; but my antagonists having displayed too much propensity to charge me, it is totally incredible if they were in possession of a scrap that would hurt me, that they would suppress it; and therefore, as similitude of hands may be forged, no notary public will persuade any fair person that a harsh letter, circumstantiating my want of truth, and which I have dared and defied any person possessed of such a paper to exhibit publicly, could exist, and would not have been produced to my confusion while I am living. When I shall be dead it can only recoil on the fabricators, and therefore I shall beseech your ladyship to preserve this letter, and permit it to appear, if you shall ever hereafter see such a false accusation arise, as, on my honour, I assure you it must be, if a letter of advice from me to Chatterton does not appear as kind as a parent or guardian could have written to that rash and unhappy adventurer.

I beg a million of pardons for troubling your ladyship with this detail, and still more with this request; but, as I have declared in print that I would enter no more into that strange and silly controversy, and as I scorn to stoop to answer nameless antagonists, I presume to deposit my defence, should it ever be necessary, in such noble and friendly hands as your ladyship's, and leave Dr. Glynn and such contemptible adversaries to wage war without an opponent, like a man that plays at cards alone, right hand against left —very merry pastime! Your ladyship's most devoted.

ORFORD.

LETTER CCCLXXI.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 18, 1792.

I HAVE wanted to write to vent myself, madam, but the French have destroyed the power of words; there is neither substantive nor epithet that can express the horror they have excited! Brutal insolence, bloody ferocity, savage barbarity, malicious injustice, can no longer be used but of some civilised country, where there is still some appearance of government. Atrocious *frenzy* would, till these days, have sounded too outrageous to be pronounced of a whole city—now it is too temperate a phrase for Paris, and would seem to palliate the enormity of their guilt by supposing madness the spring of it—but though one pities a herd of swine that are actuated by demons to rush into the sea, even those diabolic vagaries are momentary, not

stationary; they do not last for three years together, nor infect a whole nation—thank God! it is but one nation that has ever produced *two massacres* of Paris!

I have lived too long! I confess I did not conceive how abominable human nature could be on so extensive a scale as from Paris to Marseilles; nor indeed so absurd. I did not apprehend that you could educate and polish men, till you made them ten times worse than the rudest ignorance could produce. I have been shocked at scalping Indians—but I never despised savages, because they are only cruel to *enemies*, and have had no instruction, nor means of it—it is well for them!—A band of philosophers, academicians, and pedants would train them in few years to be systematic wolves and tigers; would teach them to contradict all their own professions and acts; to provoke the most injudicious wars; to wish to be a republic and massacre 800 republicans in a morning of a country whose forces and intrepidity they ought to dread; and to pull down one prison where there were but six men confined, and turn a large city (Orleans) into a jail, cram it with prisoners whom they never dared to try, because probably guiltless; and thence sentence them all to be massacred at once, because—who can imagine why, unless that the Parisians were not drunk enough with blood!

But of all their barbarities the most inhuman has been their *not* putting the poor wretched King and Queen to death three years ago! If thousands have been murdered, tortured, broiled, it has been extempore;

but Louis and his queen have suffered daily deaths in apprehension for themselves and their children. Oh! that Catherine Slay-Czar had been Queen of France in the room of Antoinette. I do not say it would have been any security for her *husband's* life; but it would have saved thousands and thousands of other lives, and preserved the late new, amiable, and disinterested Constitution of Poland. Well, that fury of the North has barefaced her own hypocrisy—she pretended to give a code of laws to her ruffians, and to emancipate their slaves, and now plunges the poor Poles again into vassalage under a vile system!

> "Esse aliquos manes et subterranea regna
> Nec pueri credunt nisi qui nondum ære."

that is, who have not the brazen front of Catherine.

Did you read, madam, the beautiful protest of Malachowski, the Marshal of the Diet? I am glad some sweet herbs spring up amidst so many poisonous plants. The Austrian and Prussian for confederating with Catherine deserve only to be saved to scourge France. Their declaring against conquest for themselves, but assures me more of their meaning it; and partitioned I hope France may be: it will be better for the French; a smaller kingdom may have some freedom,—if French can deserve to be free; a vast kingdom cannot be; and it would be better for Europe, and for us, too, though, thank them, it will be long before they can or will do anything but sluice their own veins! They are cursed with infernal *Phœnixes*; a Petion springs from a Mirabeau's ashes! What a

nation they are! Even their vanity amidst all their miseries and disgraces is not to be allayed, is unalterable. T'other night, at the Duke of Queensberry's, the Viscount de Noailles, one of the hottest heads of the first National Assembly, but who is come hither, I believe, despairing of the cause, desired to be presented to me. I knew him when he was here formerly, and in France, but did not intend to remember him. In a tone of much civility and compliment he said, "*Vous avez fait de grandes avances.*" I did not guess what he meant. He continued: "*Oui, vous êtes fort avancés dans les vêtemens, dans la nourriture.*" I believe he thought he remembered that we used twenty years ago to wear goat-skins, and live upon haws and acorns. I saw he meant to be civil, so would not answer, "*Oui, nous sommes le plus florissant pais de l'Europe.*"

You will like a speech of Lord William Gordon. Madame de Gand, the duke's passion, in one of these hot evenings, had the fire lighted, and was sitting with her back to it, literally on the hearth. Lord William said, "I see the duke likes his meat over done."

Madame de Coigny, who is here, too, and has a great deal of wit, on hearing that the mob at Paris have burnt the bust of their late favourite, Monsieur d'Epremenil, said, "*Il n'y a rien qui brûle sitôt que les lauriers secs.*"

I recollect that your ladyship bade me answer Mrs. Somebody's novel called "Desmond." Indeed, I cannot—I have never seen it, nor ever will. I neither answer Dr. Glynn, nor a *poissarde.* Twenty years ago

I might have laughed at both; but they are too little fry, and I am too old to take notice of them. Besides, when leviathans and crocodiles and alligators tempest and infest the ocean, I shall not go a privateering in a cock-boat against a smuggling pinnace, any more than I would have subscribed my silver shoe-buckles or cork-screw with my Lord Mayor and Co., to save Poland from an army of 200,000 Russians.

Adieu, madam.

LETTER CCCLXXII.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 4, 1792.

I SHOULD have been very happy, madam, if your ladyship's attendance on Lady Ravensworth would have allowed you to honour me with a visit as Lord Ossory did: I did not know she had been ill, and am rejoiced to hear of her recovery.

The day before yesterday I had been out for half an hour, and at my return found at my gate the attorney-general and Lady Louisa, and, to my great surprise, Lady Sutherland and her eldest boy, though they had arrived from Paris but two nights before. It proves the great tranquillity and courage with which her ladyship behaved there, when, after so long an absence and such scenes of horror, she is calm enough to have a mind to see my house. I had the honour of knowing her a little, and of dining with her before the embassy, but little thought of seeing her here at this moment. She is much improved in beauty. Lord

Strathearn is a very pretty child, and so impregnated with what he has seen and heard, that he was surprised at seeing no cannon in the streets of London, and asked the attorney-general where they were; and perceiving some points of rails higher than others, he said—"but there *are* pikes here!" I believe he would have found none, nor cannon, at Warsaw, had Catherine Slay-Czar suffered their glorious constitution to take place. When your ladyship's querists will shew me a glimpse of resemblance between the Diet of Poland and the former National Assembly in France, even from their outset, I will for that moment of similitude, if it can be discovered, admire the latter as I adore the former: but I am no dupe to words, nor honour the term Revolution for the mere sound. A revolution is not to be commended for simply overturning a government, though as bad as that of France was. A mob, or a czarina, or janizaries, can destroy good or bad. A revolution, before it has any claim to praise, must give a better government, and that can only be done by integrity, wisdom, and temper, as our revolution did, and as the generous and disinterested Poles would have done—*sed diis aliter visum!* I should rather say *diabolis.* Pedantry, actuated by envy and every species of injustice and barbarity, and impregnated with vanity and insolence, and void of any plan but that of seizing power, and, I believe, plunder, were not likely to produce patriots, and, still less, legislators. Accordingly, beginning by disregarding and disobeying that first groundwork of

liberty, the intentions and instructions of the whole nation their constituents, they hurried into contradicting their own decrees as fast as they made them, pronounced property sacred, and seized it everywhere, declared for universal peace, and usurped Papal and German dominions, proclaimed everybody at liberty to live where they pleased, but burnt their houses and forced them to fly, and then confiscated their estates if they did not return at the hazard of their lives. The option of perjury or starving was another benefit bestowed on all the conscientious clergy. The Bastille (where only six prisoners were found, rather a moderate number for such a capital as Paris,) was destroyed, and every other prison was crammed, nay, the city of Orleans was turned into a vast jail, whence nobody was even indulged with a trial; and, at last, by every species of artifice, falsehood, and imposture, the philosophic legislators, and their excrements the clubs, have worked themselves and the people up to such a pitch of infernal frenzy, that they have produced a second St. Barthélemi, and realized what has been thought a legend in history—in short, a whole senate has assumed the accursed dignity of the "old man of the mountain," and spawned a legion of assassins! and with still more impudence, for he did not proclaim his mandates openly for the murder of princes and generals.

The *former* National Assembly did not commit *all* these atrocious enormities, but they led the way, and checked none. Did they punish the barbarities at Avignon and at other places? What excesses did they

disapprove? What liberty did they confer, but that of leaving every man free to hang and murder whom he pleased? In short, madam, they have blasted and branded liberty—perhaps for centuries—and for that and their barbarity, I abhor them; and by destroying their own country—who can foresee for how long? Posterity will look on them with horror; and their not having in three years of convulsions produced one man, but the villanous Mirabeau, eminent for abilities, on the contrary, legions of folly, absurdity, and ignorance, will give future generations as much contempt for the French, as devout people have for the Jews.

If anybody from such a mass of detestable proceedings can pick out a moment where I am to stop and admire, and where I am to divide my partiality to the Poles with the revolutionists in France, or to rank the Barnaves, Lameths and Noailleses with that true patriot Malachowski, whose honest and humane protest brought the tears into my eyes, I will confess that I have been blind for a moment; or I will even go so far as to say for the term *revolution*—

> "Quod si non aliam venturo fata *Neroni*
> Invenere viam—
> Scelera ipsa nefasque
> Hâc mercede placent."

The Polish revolution and ours were noble, wise and moderate—wise because moderate; but to subvert all justice and order for pedantic and speculative experiments, without having anything to substitute in their places, as their contradictions have demonstrated, is the

acme of folly, incapacity and ignorance of human nature; and I shall take leave to despise the late august diet—the present is below contempt; and if the nation ever recovers its senses, it will be ashamed of descending from such progenitors. Adieu, madam; but pray set me on writing no more declamations.

LETTER CCCLXXIII.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 10, 1792.

MADAM, I return the inclosed * as soon as I can, not thinking it at all right to keep it—indeed, it frightens me; but I hope you will not treat my poor rhapsodies in the same manner: they are always the skimmings of my thoughts at the moment of writing, and the next day I do not at all recollect what I have written. Above all things, I would not have the presumption even to seem to enter into a controversy with Mr. Fitzpatrick; I have too high an opinion of his parts and wit to think myself in any degree a match for him—half superannuated as I know myself, I should yield to understandings much inferior to his. Indeed, I always do shun disputes. Whatever can be known to a certainty, is known; what cannot be, may never be decided. I have another cogent reason for avoiding disputation; I may very likely, in arguing, set out in the wrong; and if I do, I am pretty sure of remaining so, as one grows partial to one's own arguments.

* None with the MSS.—ED.

How long the French remained in the right at the beginning of the Revolution, may be a question—if they are so still, and if the butchery of 4000 prisoners, men and women, untried, is a necessary and common consequence of reformation or self-defence—mercy on me! —I shall be persuaded that I am a good deal more than *half* superannuated, for I certainly cannot beat any such horrible opinion into the head of my Whiggism. I know I have always been a coward on points of religion and politics. Above twenty years ago, in a conversation on those topics with that speculative heroine, Mrs. Macaulay, I shocked her by avowing, that had I been Luther, and thoroughly convinced—a little more perhaps than he was, that I should be perfectly in the right in attacking the church of Rome, yet could I have foreseen (and perhaps he ought to have foreseen) that in order to save the souls of as many unborn millions as you please, I should be the occasion of spilling the blood—come, I will be moderate, and say, of only three hundred thousand living persons, I should have boggled, and nothing but a very palpable angel indeed, with a most substantial commission from heaven, would have persuaded me to register my patent in the chancery of my conscience, and set about the business.

For the hosts of assassins at Paris I think them palpable devils; and a little worse than the spiritual ones, of whom we are told. They corroborate too an old axiom, that extremes meet: enthusiasm and philosophy are those extremes, and have proved of the same

trade. What can be said for the late massacres at Paris, and those that have been raging for three years there, at Avignon, Marseilles, &c., that is not pleadable for the St. Barthélemi, for the slaughter of the Vaudois, for the destruction of the Mexicans and Peruvians, and for the ravages by Mahomet and the Ottomans?—Why, certain men, Charles IX., Philip II., Louis XIV., and their similars, *thought* they were warranted to sacrifice any number of their fellowcreatures, in order to make other numbers something happier—in the sentiments of those self-constituted executioners. For the people of France, till they were told otherwise by the philosophers, I doubt a little whether they were a quarter so unhappy as they are at present, especially having had that singular felicity, as Frenchmen, of thinking that France was in every point preferable to the rest of the universe. But here I will stop, and neither now nor any more touch on the subject. My opinions are for myself. I meddle not with those of others, nor are they of importance to me, who have so little time to remain here. I am only concerned to have a worse opinion of mankind than I thought it possible to conceive, or than any reading had given me, for this last butchery in the prisons, was, as far as I know, unparalleled. The story of the "old man of the mountain" and his assassins was rife at the time of the crusades: I do not recollect at this moment in what books it is to be found. They are, I believe, mentioned by Joinville, and perhaps in general dictionaries —posterity will find the revival of them in the records

of the most august diet in the world, and in all the histories of the Revolution in France!

In the midst of these atrocious scenes, it is impossible now and then not to smile, not only at the egregious follies and puerilities of the Assembly and its tribunes, whose panic and despair break out in insolence, while no enemy is actually in sight, and who butcher women because they dread the Duke of Brunswick; but collateral incidents are too ludicrous not to check one's sighs, and loosen one's muscles. In the midst of the massacre of Monday last Mr. Merry immortalised, not by his verses, but by those of the Baviad, was mistaken for the Abbé Maury, and was going to be hoisted to the *lanterne*. He cried out he was Merry the poet—the ruffians who probably had never read the scene in Shakspeare yet replied, "then we will hang you for your bad verses"—but he escaped better than Cinna, I don't know how, and his fright cost him but a few *gossamery tears*—and I suppose he will be happy to recross the *silky ocean*, and return to shed dolorous nonsense in rhyme over the woes of *this* happy country.

P.S.—I was a hearty American, madam, as you know well, and never heard of massacres there in cold blood; and Poland shewed that revolutions may be effected without assassination. The French have stabbed liberty for centuries, and made despotism itself preferable to such tyrannic anarchy. Muley Ishmael, King of Morocco, it is true, used for a morning's exercise to dispatch a dozen or two of his subjects; but

he would have been sadly tired and overheated if he had aimed at lopping a fourth or even an eighth part of the heads that fell in the prisons at Paris on the *bloody Monday;* and besides Muley's victims thought it a mighty honour, if not the high road to Paradise, to die by the royal hand. I scarcely think that the Parisian butchers meant any favour to those they sacrificed, though they cut the throats of 120 poor priests, who had preferred beggary to perjury and violation of their consciences. If liberty can digest such a hecatomb without kicking, she must have a pretty strong stomach — not Catherine of Russia a stronger. I wish she had been Queen of France for the last three years!—Your ladyship's devoted, &c.

LETTER CCCLXXIV.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 8, 1792.

Oh! madam, your ladyship, and even I, did not wait for my own favourite echo. I did stay before I replied, till I was certain of the capture of Dumourier's army. Alas! echo has responsed in a very different tone! It is the Duke of Brunswick who has retired! What a thunder-clap! The cannibals triumph, and unless they devour one another, behold a republic of 20,000,000 of assassins! This retreat is so astonishing, that one can only stare!—How unlike to his campaign in Holland! What massacres may it not produce in France, and what mischiefs in Europe!

Even that wretch, Philip l'Egalité, will triumph, and be proud of the trousers he wears, that he may be *sans culottes*.

I have seen the Duchesse de Fleury, who is much the prettiest Frenchwoman I ever beheld. Though little, and more than nut-brown, she is perfect of her size, with very fine eyes and nose, and a most beautiful mouth and teeth, and natural colour. She is but two and twenty, very lively, and very sensible. I could not help describing her, she struck me so much; but I mentioned her because she told me she lived close to the Abbaie, and heard the cries and groans of 120 priests that were butchered there: what will become of her and all the fugitives! She gave a watch of thirty guineas for a passport to the director of the municipality; for their thirst for blood *can* be staunched by their thirst of gain; and one may trust that thirst of power and of gain will whet their daggers against one another.

You are in the right, madam, not to wade into your forest. Though the rain is abated, the sun has not dried his rays, for he has not appeared even in his usual October.

I know not a syllable of English news; and am afraid of going to Richmond to see the poor French colony since this fatal piece of news.—What an era! —Adieu, madam.—Your ladyship's most devoted.

LETTER CCCLXXV.

Sunday night late, Oct. 14, 1792.

I HAVE been two or three times going to answer your letter, madam, but what can I say that you have not thought, or conjectured? And of news I know not a tittle. The French mail was yesterday thought to be stopped, and to-day the eternal rain has prevented my seeing anybody but Mrs. Damer, who came from Goodwood, and has left me. Nor am I impatient to learn what cannot be good—whence can good come *now?* The dragon's teeth are drawn and on the ground, but will not produce new armed men! I wish I could avoid thinking, for I hate to wade into new chaos—or form fresh conjectures, after being so wofully disappointed in the most promising—or why should I? It is no longer probable that I should live to see but a short way into the confusions that may open. May I be deceived on one hand, as I have been on the other! Whether there have been quarrels, treachery, ignorance, folly, or sheer misfortune, how can I pretend to know? Who will own any but the last? And when so many thousands are interested to propagate falsehood, and so many more will coin their own guesses into assertions, or affirm from the slightest authorities, simple as I sit here, I must wait for facts, for reason I am sure cannot help one.

I have heard what your ladyship hints about Ireland, and think the proceeding most abominable

and most absurd, and far more likely to bring on the mischief they pretend to apprehend. The Dissenters will embrace the Catholics there, though persecuting and decrying them here. I differ so much from the remonstrants, that I should have thought it wise in government to disperse the poor fugitive priests amongst their Irish brethren, to exhibit and detail their own woes and sufferings, and warn the Catholics against aiding the Dissenters to demolish all government, all religion, and all professions — indeed, everything! For the French priests, I own I honour them—they preferred beggary to perjury, and have died, or fled to preserve the integrity of their consciences. It certainly was not the French clergy, but the philosophers, that have trained up their countrymen to be the most bloody monsters upon earth. To the persecuted priest, I am half ready to say with Felix, "almost thou persuadest me to be—a Catholic."

Now I am forced by the subject to turn to what is ludicrous, Lord Cliefden's fraction of a subscription—surely the duchess must have dictated it, or nobly given some old quarter moidores that would not go. I have reserved my donation for the second subscription, for charity is apt to cool before the second call, and then the second may be wanted, and the first has been noble and ample.

I did not mention Miss Knight's "Marcus Flaminius" to your ladyship *because* it is dedicated to me, and my very just commendation of it would have looked like vanity, at least like partiality—since I must name it,

I do protest I think it a wonderful performance. There is so much learning and good sense well digested, such exact knowledge of Roman characters and manners, and the barbarian simplicity, so well painted and made so interesting, that it is impossible not to admire the judgment and excellent understanding of the authoress, though as a novel, which it can scarce be called, it is not very amusing. There is an old Gothic chieftain, whose story is very affecting; and there is a Greek who, you will find, madam, is the most faulty part of the book, *though well levelled*, but he achieves extreme improbabilities—I will not forestall how. I ought not to omit how Roman the style is, without pedantry. You will wonder, madam, how the book came to be addressed to me by a lady I never saw, and barely knew existed in Italy by hearing Miss Berry talk of a mad Lady Knight, with a learned daughter there. Last winter Lord Ailesbury brought me the MS., begged I would read it, and give him my opinion of it, which I was most unwilling to undertake. Yet as his lordship has at different times, though little acquainted with him, shewn me much partiality and many civilities, I could not refuse. I did read, and was so surprised at a work so far above what I expected, that I declared my approbation in strong terms. I was much more astonished when his lordship said, that if I liked it, he was commissioned to ask my consent to its being dedicated to me. I pleaded every argument I could devise against such a destination. At last I thought of one that seemed

infallible *vis-à-vis* a favourite servant of the queen. I said Miss Knight was such an honour to her sex, that "Flaminius" deserved the patronage of her Majesty. Alas, Miss Knight had already enjoyed that honour—I suppose through the same god-father—she had written a sequel to Rasselas, and it had the Queen's sanction—I had no subterfuge left.

Monday noon.

The newspaper is just arrived as the post is going out, and has brought such a load of bad news, and I know nothing else, that this time I *will* wait for the echo—adieu! madam.

LETTER CCCLXXVI.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 29, 1792.

I DID conclude, madam, that the gloomy complexion of the times was the cause of your ladyship's silence, as it has been of mine. Not possessing Ovid's flow of expression, I cannot vary my phrases *de Tristibus;* and my reasoning and experience have been so baffled for these last three months, that I scarce allow myself to form a conjecture; and if I do, I resolve not to vent it; but to compose my patience, and wait —not only for events, but for their confirmation, as truth seems to have taken flight, as much as common sense, and which I regret still more, humanity! Was it possible to imagine that philosophy was to plunge

the dagger into the entrails of civilization; and that assassination was to grow contagious? This is such a bloody anatomy of human nature and unfolds such horrid seeds in its darkest recesses, that from thinking ill of this or that nation, I am driven to shudder for our species, and if I could be content with the speculation, would fain persuade myself that some blasting influence has blown over Europe, and that the plague has assumed a new modification. But this is a rhapsody breathed from the shocks my feelings have received.—When I cool, I have better hopes. I trust that the abominable have rashly let out indications of their intentions. I did not doubt but that their secret machinations were eager and industrious, and I feared they would not appear openly, till fully prepared. I feared, too, that despondency prevailed—but, as evident symptoms of what has been meditated have appeared, I trust a firm spirit is arising, and that men will be prepared to meet the danger with courage and resolution. Dejection is the colour that must encourage the evil-minded. This is a brief abstract, madam, of my thoughts; whole pages more would but turn on the same axis; and I am too weary of my own thoughts to have pleasure in spreading them on paper.

I am still here, and very well. The weather, which your ladyship dislikes, has been so mild here, after the worst of all summers, that whole November has appeared to me delightful; and if December is not worse tempered, I shall not think of removing to London yet,

where I have outlived most of my particular acquaintance, and I cannot form new amongst those whom I cannot meet till midnight. I have here society enough around me, and at home I have always amusements. In town I have nothing to employ me, nor anything I wish to do.

I remember the St. Legers your ladyship recollects, but know nothing of the present breed.

I am sorry you are so little satisfied with "Marcus Flaminius:" it has faults, yet I own, I thought it would have been more successful. Perhaps in the former part of my letter I may have been talking what will look like sense, as it coincides with your ladyship's sentiments. I have now a mind, according to my old propensity, to utter a little nonsense; and what is more foolish than to prophecy? In short, from much meditation on the present aspect of the world, and from looking a good deal forwarder than the actual conflict of chaos, and its settlement into the Lord knows what—but subside at last the jarring elements of anarchy must—I have taken it into my head that some totally new religion will start up. The crimes and distresses of mankind will fit them for receiving some new impression, if violent and novel enough; and when they have had all morality and justice eradicated out of their hearts, and shall find that promised liberty and equality have made them but more uncomfortable than they were, with the additional load of guilt on their consciences, they will listen to any new-fashioned plan of repentance, and still more readily to any new-built paradise that will

compensate for the destruction of all that was desirable on the present earth. Having no system ready to offer to the world, and being quite content with the honour of prediction, I shall take my leave of your ladyship, trusting that you will feel a little obliged to me for having selected you for the first communication of my "Novum Organum," which, like Lord Bacon's, will certainly be dilated by future projectors, though without the credit of original discovery.—Yours, &c. ORFORD.

LETTER CCCLXXVII.

Strawberry Hill, Dec. 7, 1792.

YOUR ladyship has made me smile beyond my Lord Chesterfield's allowed simper, by sending me to take my seat in the House of Lords out of tenderness for my character; if serious, I should not doubt your sincerity; but as you can look grave and soften your voice, when you have a mind to banter your friends, I rather think you were willing to try whether I have the lurking vanity of supposing myself of any importance. Indeed I have not; on the contrary, I know that having determined never to take that unwelcome seat, I should only make myself ridiculous, by fancying it could *signify* a straw whether I take it or not. If I have anything of character, it must dangle on my being consistent. I quitted and abjured Parliament near thirty years ago: I never repented, and I will not contradict myself now. It is not in the

House of Lords that I will *rise* again; I will keep my dry bones for the general review day. A good lady last year was delighted at my becoming a peer, and said, "I hope you will get an Act of Parliament for putting down Faro." As if *I* could make acts of Parliament! and could I, it would be very consistent too in me, who for some years played more at Faro than any body.

A wholesome spirit is arisen, and no wonder. The French have given warnings enough to property to put it on its guard. I have been too precipitate in my predictions, and therefore am cautious of conjecturing; yet, if my reasoning was too quick, it was not ill-founded; and as famine is striding over France, delusion's holiday will stop short, and give place to bitter scenes at its native home, which may save Europe from returning to primitive desolation. Abominable as the government of France was, it is plain that speculative philophers were the most unfit of all men to produce a salutary reformation. The French, by antecedent, as well as by recent proofs, have never been fit to be *unchained at once*, so innate is their savage barbarity. What ignorance of human nature to proclaim to twenty-four millions of people, that all laws are impositions; and what medium have those mad dictators been able to find between laws and the violence of force? They will experience the reign of the latter; and perhaps go through all the revolutions of military despotism that have afflicted Egypt for so many ages. If my memory does not fail me, the *shepherd* kings of

that country, who I suppose were *philosophers*, were the first tyrants deposed. Accustomed to cut the throats of their sheep, and versed in nothing but star-gazing, and hoisted from poverty to power, I do not wonder they applied their butchering knife to their subjects, and massacred away, that the rest of their people and flocks might have fairer equality of pasture. —Condorcet is just such a shepherd.

The city of London does not seem at all disposed to be reformed by the *Academies de Sciences et de Belles Lettres*. I always thought those tribunals most impertinent; but did not just conceive that they would spawn legions of Huns and Vandals; but extremes meet, and incense and assassination have sprung out of the same dunghill! The servility and gross adulation of that nation persuaded their kings that they were all wise and omnipotent; and their kings being but men, and *French men*, no wonder they were intoxicated and arrogant. Is not Dumourier already a sketch of Louis Quatorze? And is not every brawler in the National Assembly as vain and insolent as Marshal Villars who, though having witnessed all the victories and modesty of the Duke of Marlborough, plumed himself more on one very inferior combat, gained after Marlborough was withdrawn, than our hero did after years of success!

Knowing a little of human nature, as I have lived to do, and how unfit one man or all are to be trusted with unlimited power (and consequently I remain neither a royalist nor a republican), I must admire our own constitution, that invented, or rather has formed, three

powers, which battling one another with opinions, not with force, are more likely to keep the balance fluctuating than to make one scale preponderate by flinging the sword, like Brennus the Gaul, into the one that he chose should be the heaviest.

I wish there were any other topic of discourse than politics; but as one can hear, one can talk nor think on anything else. It has pervaded all ranks and ages. A miss, not fourteen, asked Miss Agnes Berry lately whether she was aristocrat or democrat? And a waiter at the "Toy," at Hampton Court, said of a scraper at the last ball, that he had a fine finger on the organization of a violin. It is provoking that we should catch even their fashionable and absurd pedantry! Adieu! madam!

LETTER CCCLXXVIII.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 8, 1793.

I RETURN your ladyship's kind wishes for the new year; and may it prove more felicitous to mankind, as well as to us individuals, than the last bloody months have been—not that I could feel commiseration for hosts of assassins, were the hour of punishment and retribution to arrive before this time twelvemonth. Orleans, Condorcet, and such monsters—for oh! there are many almost as execrable—have dammed up every vein that would have throbbed; if they were doomed to execution, I should not feel for Marats and Robes-

pierres; yet they were only low natural Frenchmen, and only wanted to be invited to massacre their countrymen. It is those on whom Heaven had showered its best blessings and gifts, whom I abhor for their cool, premeditated, cowardly crimes. Mr. Craufurd has brought over tales of new horrors. They now seize the estates of those they have butchered, as of Monsieur de Clermont, and say they do not know of their being dead, but believe they are *emigrés*. Condorcet, who is believed to have suggested, or been dipped, in the murder of the Duc de la Rochfoucault, had fallen in love with a girl without a fortune, and whom he could not afford to marry; the Duchesse d'Anville, mother of the duc, gave him a hundred thousand livres, that he might marry her, as he did. I should not believe this charge, if Condorcet, in the National Assembly, had not said, on their receiving a present of a bust of Brutus, "why send us a head of Brutus? We do not want that; why not rather give us a bust of Ankerstrom?" The basest of all assassins, who loaded his pistol with crooked nails! Can the extremest credulity of charity haggle about believing any villany of such a fiend?

To complete the *trium diaboliad* of Ankerstrom and Condorcet, hear the claim of Orleans. Ten days ago General Conway dined at Lord Rawdon's with the Prince of Wales, the Abbés de *St. Far* and St. Alban, natural brothers of Orleans, Monsieur de Bouillé and his son, and other French, some of whom told this anecdote; that early in the revolution Orleans was con-

certing a plan for the murder of the king. One of the company said, "but, sir, you will certainly be detected." "No," said Beelzebub, "for I will have *St. Far* stabbed too, and nobody will suspect me of being concerned in the murder of my own brother too." The two brothers neither contradicted the story, nor seemed sorry it was told; nor, doubtless, would it have been related in their presence, unless it had been certain that they would not be offended. Pray observe, madam, that I never call his serene highness *Egalité*, for that pretended humility is presumption. *He* can have no equal, who is below all mankind.

I less wonder at their atheism than at all the rest; such infernals can believe in no hell, unless, like Belphegor, they came thence themselves.

If my mind broils with detestation, it has room left for admiration too. The poor King I have long thought the best natured and most inoffensive of men; and what a recompense for restoring the ancient parliaments, without which he might have remained despotic to this hour! On that recall somebody wrote under the statue of Henry Quatre, on the *Pont Neuf*, this beautiful word, *Resurrexit.* Henry was stabbed in the midst of that vile town. *Resurrexit* is forgot, and Louis has been tortured for above three years, and may be torn to pieces in the same shambles!

For the Queen, she has passed a like succession of ordeals, and come out whiter than snow. Though three National Inquisitions have had the members and papers of the *châtelet*, and all evidences living or

written in their hands ; though every page and chambermaid of the unfortunate Antoinette has been in their power too, with the use of torture too, has a single stain been fixed on her—though scandal had spared none ! I will not turn my eyes homewards, as I wish such scenes should be unparalleled out of France. But alas ! have we not hands amongst us that have been ready to grasp daggers likewise ?

Lord Edward is certainly married to Pamela, and Mrs. Genlis, *alias* Sillery, *alias* Brulart, as she would be styled at the Old Bailey, is going to live with them in Ireland. Did you hear Lord Darnley's answer to Lord Henry, who told him he had expunged his supporters on his chariot, and asked, "if he would not do so too ?" "No," said Lord Darnley, "I would not blot out my supporters, unless they were *monkeys*"—the real supporters of the Fitzgeralds—how lucky !

Of my own health, I thank your ladyship, I have no reason to complain : I slept last night near ten hours, though three times twenty-five years of age ; is not that being well enough ? I hope you and yours, madam, will be wished happy new years at as late a period !

LETTER CCCLXXIX.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 6, 1793.

I WAS not sorry, madam, at not hearing from your ladyship for some time, as I was totally unable to have answered you with my own hand, and not much more

capable of dictating to Kirgate. I have been very ill with the gout for above a month: it began in my right hand, a middle finger of which opened, and discharged a sharp-pointed chalk-stone, that literally weighs four grains and a half; but it is quite healed, and as you see I am writing with it. It was more provoking, that the left hand, that had nothing to do in the quarrel, would meddle too, yes, and produce chalk from the middle finger likewise, but scarce having wherewithal revenged itself upon the whole hand, wrist, elbow, and shoulder, on that side; and it was but this morning that I moulted my bootikin, and could get on a warm glove.

These are the miserable anecdotes of the prison-house of your correspondent, madam! Judge then if I can make any other reply to your kind invitation to Houghton Ampthill, but that I am not likely to make any more journeys but my last! A travelling quarry would be a great natural curiosity—but I am not ambitious of being recorded in the Philosophical Transactions—my executors, if they please, may contribute a print of my singular specimen of chalk.

For the sake of others I am sorry that pretty outside is demolished, and that Mr. Holland has so much of the spirit of a lucrative profession in him, as to prefer destroying to not being employed.

The portrait, shooting with a cross-bow, I should rather suppose, not having seen it,* to represent Prince Henry than King James. The prince is often drawn

* This picture taken from Houghton, is still at Ampthill Park.—Ed.

as using some activity. There are two pictures of him, one at St. James's, and the other at Lord Guildford's, at Wroxton, where with Lord Harrington of Exton, he has just killed a deer. At the other painting it is impossible I should guess; and if it exhibits any of Dente's extravagances, I wish not to see it.

The letter, which I return, by the help of Mr. Lysons the divine, who is with me to-day, I can inform your ladyship is a most insignificant, grandmotherly epistle to Lord Bruce (afterwards first Earl of Ailesbury), from his Grannum Magdalen daughter of Sir Alexander Clarke, and talks of his lady mother, and lady aunt, and of his tutor, though he had a lady wife.

Of the nation of infernal monsters I desire to talk no more than your ladyship. Would I could avoid thinking on them! Oh! what would I not give to hear the Queen was dead without being murdered!

An account is come of the sudden death of Lord Buckinghamshire: he had the gout in his foot, dipped it in cold water, and killed himself; nobody can play such tricks with impunity but I. Mrs. Hobart is now countess, with a coronet I believe little gilt: Norfolk-coronets scarce pay for the fashion.

I have railed at our summers to your ladyship: this has been a superb one, and has constantly, contrary to the practice of its predecessors, recovered its temper instantly after the hardest showers of rain; consequently the verdure and leafage are in the highest perfection: my eyes have been delighted, though my limbs suffered; one must comfort one's self with what

one can. I hope you have no occasion, madam, to search for succedaneums!

LETTER CCCLXXX.

Strawberry Hill, Nov 2, 1793.

I CERTAINLY, madam, told you nothing about the Queen of France but what you did or might know as well as I, that is from the newspapers, my sole channel of intelligence. How it should be possible for me to tell you any destination on the fate of Madame Elizabeth, I cannot divine: who can do more than guess? And that must be in one of the extremes—no possible reason for murdering her there can be; but as whatever can be conceived of most horrible, is most probable to happen from the frantic fiends at Paris, the more shocking the crime the more it is to be expected, and therefore I beg to say no more on so horrible a subject. I do nothing but try to read whatever I can suppose will lead my thoughts a moment from such detestable scenes.

Your ladyship knows well how hastily and inconsiderately I write; it is generally as impossible for me to recollect the next day what I have said in a letter of the preceding, as what I wrote a twelvemonth ago. I have been trying to recall what I could say about Richmond Park, and I do suppose that on your telling me of the havoc made round Farming-Woods, I replied that I conceived how I should feel if the wood in the Park was to be cut down.

Lady Waldegrave has been with me two or three days, and left me yesterday morning. I have seen nobody else since Tuesday.—What can I have to say?

LETTER CCCLXXXI.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 10, 1793.

I RETURN your ladyship the lines, as you ordered, and do not recollect having seen them before. They may have been written by Mary, for I think she did write some French verses; and, if she did write these, very poorly too, both as to the language and poetry, as far as I can read them, for they are very badly transcribed. They ought to be well authenticated, if the original paper exists. Has it lain at Fotheringhay till now, and yet is preserved, and was never seen before? I am a little incredulous, and as incurious, for the lines only excite compassion, no admiration.

I am much obliged to your ladyship's inquiries. I cannot say I am very well; yet as I am not likely at my age to improve, it is not worth a new paragraph: nor can I send you one that deserves to be sent. I have not seen a face these three days but of my own servants; and the wheelbarrow that carries away the dead leaves, passes its time in a livelier manner than I do. I might *seek* for more diversion; yet not being at all convinced that I should find it, I am content to let the days pass as they please; and when they bring me no disturbance, I am not of a temper to invent any for myself.

If old folks would be satisfied with tranquillity, they would find more of it attainable than any former objects of their pursuits. Nature furnishes them with insensibility to others; but then they are often apt to substitute the love of money for the love of their friends, and are so foolish as not to reflect that every half-year's interest of their money costs them half a year of their life. I don't know whether any moralist ever made this reflection; if there did, it has been like other truths, of little effect. The French philosophers take another method: they do not demonstrate the inefficacy of moralizing. On the contrary, lest it should have any operation, they expunge all morality and attempt to establish universal liberty by destruction of all religion, and all the terrors of futurity. Men would certainly be perfectly free, if restrained by no government without, and by no apprehensions within. The system is a vast experiment. Fortunately, many of the inventors have been, and probably more of its propagators will be, the victims of such diabolic tenets: and as some axioms still maintain their solidity, that of *extremes meeting* grows every day more uncontrovertible. Turkish despotism, that depopulated so many beautiful provinces and islands for the mere luxury of retaining the useless soil, is copied continually by French democracy; and the convention exults in the destruction of Lyons, and their own cities and towns, as if they had put all Vienna to the sword. It would be curious, could one know, of the supposed twenty-four millions of inhabitants of France five years ago, how many it has lost by emigra-

tions, banishment, massacres, executions, battles, sieges, captives made, &c.; and by what is never counted in wars, the hosts of families of peasants, whose cottages and hovels have been destroyed by foragers and march of armies. Famine too, I suppose, could produce a long bill of those that have fallen in her department.

There is another item not yet felt, but that will be a heavy one. It is allowed that all the new levies that have been forced to the frontiers, especially to Maubeuge, are lads of fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen years of age. This is some drawback on population.

One might make some deduction from the extinction of the species by the cessation of monastic vows; but they had ceased to a considerable degree *before* the Revolution. When I was last at Paris, I had observed how rarely I met a monk or friar about the streets, and made the remark to a very intelligent person, asking him whether the writings of Voltaire and the philosophers had made the religious ashamed or unwilling to appear in public? "No," said he, "but those writings have done much more: they have so damped professions, that few men make the vows. In that convent," said he, pointing to a very large one in the Rue St. Denis, "there are literally but two friars." This is a curious fact, madam, and I am glad I have scribbled till I recollected it. It will make you some amends for the rest of my common-place.

LETTER CCCLXXXII.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 9, 1793.

YOUR ladyship will forgive me for not thanking you for the paper you were so good as to send me, and for not answering your letter sooner, when you hear that for this fortnight I have had a surgeon daily attending one of the chalk-mines in my right hand, which, though it does not absolutely hinder my writing, as you see, obliges me to write so slowly, and consequently better than I usually do, that I could engrave a letter in less time. I might have employed Kirgate; but I hate to dictate, when not actually forced.

Lady Compton's letter I saw many years ago, and think it has been in print since more than once, particularly, I believe, in the "Gentleman's Magazine."

It will not sound much of a tone with my excuse, when I say that I have been twice at the play since I came to town the week before last; but not being yet reduced to walk on all-fours or not walk at all, and getting a charitable hand to lead me in and out, I did venture, and yet shall not commit such juvenilities again in haste; nor have I so little shame as to laugh at a much younger man thinking of mounting tiger, ridicule in myself appearing more terrible to me than in any other man, as I am always warning myself against it. I met Mr. G. about a week ago, and said

to the person next me, "I am glad no caricaturist is present; he would certainly draw Mr. G. and me like the old print for children of Somebody and Nobody."

The Berrys are in Yorkshire, and have been so these four months. I have never so much as seen the person of Mallet du Pan's book; I read very little now, and only for amusement, as it is too late to be improving myself for another world. I have found out another occupation that employs a good deal of my useless time, which is sleeping. As I have the happy gift of going to sleep whenever I shut my eyes, I do not throw it away, but prefer it to hundreds of books, which would only have the same effect, with more trouble to my lame fingers. These last implore your ladyship's pardon for saying no more, and are your most devoted, though inactive servants, &c.

LETTER CCCLXXXIII.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 26, 1793.

You are too good, madam, in giving yourself the trouble of inquiring after my decays. As they are not so rapid as I might reasonably expect, they are not worthy of interesting any body; and while seldom attended by pain, I have little cause for complaint.

I am glad Lord and Lady Warwick are pleased with their new villa: it is a great favourite with me. In my brother's time I used to sit with delight in the bow-

window in the great room, for besides the lovely scene of Richmond, with the river, park, and barges, there is an incessant ferry for foot passengers between Richmond and Isleworth, just under the terrace; and on Sundays Lord Shrewsbury pays for all the Catholics that come to his chapel from the former to the latter, and Mrs. Keppel has counted an hundred in one day, at a penny each. I have a passion for seeing passengers, provided they do pass; and though I have the river, the road, and two foot-paths before my blue room at Strawberry, I used to think my own house dull whenever I came from my brother's. Such a partiality have I for moving objects, that in advertisements of country-houses I have thought it a recommendation when there was a N.B. of *three stage coaches pass by the door every day.* On the contrary, I have an aversion to a park, and especially for a walled park, in which the capital event is the coming of the cows to water. A park-wall with ivy on it and fern near it, and a back parlour in London in summer, with a dead creeper and a couple of sooty sparrows, are my strongest ideas of melancholy solitude. *A pleasing melancholy* is a very august personage, but not at all good company. I am still worse, when I have so little to say; but indeed I only meant this as a letter of thanks for your kind inquiries after my lame hand, of which my surgeon has taken leave this morning.

Your ladyship's most obliged, &c.

LETTER CCCLXXXIV.

Jan. 30, 1794.

LORD OSSORY was so good as to lend me the inclosed amusing paper, and ordered me to send it to your ladyship. I cannot take up my pen, which I have totally laid aside but for the most urgent letters of business (and yet most of those are consigned to Kirgate) without adding a few words, though when Lord Ossory is in town, he knows ten times more than I do, who only catch some rebounds from newspapers, and believe few or none till they have been repeated till they are stale.

Political news now occupying half the face of the globe, a great part of the geography of which I have forgotten, are much too extensive for my digestion; and the home-manufacture of novelties are become almost indifferent to me, for living so much out of the world, the very persons of most of the actors are perfect strangers to me: they are the grandchildren, and great grandchildren of my former intimates. Those of my past time that did remain are dropping round me, and though chiefly mere acquaintance, they leave gaps in my narrow society, which I cannot fill with their descendants. Lord Buckinghamshire, Lord Digby, Lord Barrington, Lady Greenwich, Lord Pembroke, Sir Charles Hotham, were on the stage when I frequented it, and, though the vacuum they have made, will not be perceived a month hence, they occasion one in my

memory; and when one is become a rare remnant of one's contemporaries, I should think it unnatural, at least it is so to me, to interest one's self in the common occurrences of the world. And, if one is little touched by them, one is certainly little qualified to amuse others. This is my apology to your ladyship for being so remiss in the correspondence with which you so long were pleased to honour me. I have not lost my spirits, but my activity is gone, and it is grown pleasant to indulge my indolence, of which for more than threescore years and ten I had no idea. In real regard, I am as much as ever, your ladyship's devoted humble servant.

LETTER CCCLXXXV.

Strawberry Hill, July 22, 1794.

I RETURN the inclosed, madam, as I ought: it could not add to the contempt I have long felt for the instigator,—it suits well with his theologic writings, and pacific principles.

I had the pleasure of meeting Lady Warwick lately at her next door neighbour's, Lady Bute's, and she has promised me the honour of coming to see my house, but I have not been to wait on her yet from the excessive heat of the mornings. I little thought I should live to complain of the violence of an English summer, but this has been so torrid as to make me seriously ill —though I believe less from its warmth than from my

own extreme weakness. I have of late years been subject to great palpitations, and they come more frequently and last longer. The wise in life and death insist they are only nervous; however I was seized with one on Saturday night, which continued so stormy that at four in the morning I was forced to send a man and horse to Twickenham for the apothecary, having such acute pain in my breast with it, that I concluded it the gout, and a warrant for me. Before he could arrive, I had a slight vomiting, fell asleep for four hours—and am here still! This is a pretty history to trouble your ladyship with, yet I know nothing else but what every body knows or does not know from the newspapers, and that mass is much too vast for speculation: it is a stupendous and horrible chaos, and I know not out of what ark a Noah is to dispatch a dove with an olive branch, nor where he will find one to gather,—roots and branches all seem to be plucked up!

Lord Hugh and Lady Horatia were here three days ago; she had left her poor sister Waldegrave the day before, who is all she is or can be yet, composed.

Lord Hertford has acted with great nobleness towards his brothers and sisters. It is pleasant to have virtues and heroism and great qualities to relate of this country, when fiends and furies rage in the rest of Europe.—Your ladyship's most devoted.

LETTER CCCLXXXVI.

Strawberry Hill, July 29, 1794.

THE letter which I return, madam, is indeed a very proper one, and the writer, Lady Maria, a very sensible girl. Her father doted on her. Lady Waldegrave admires her reason and quickness, but will not spoil her. Unfortunately for herself she was grown fondest of the poor boy, whom she has just lost so lamentably; and I am sorry to hear that she does not recover the shock so well as we had flattered ourselves she would: but I will say no more on anything relating to myself, into which your ladyship's strange partiality is too apt to betray me (witness your last flattering note), but to send you a codicil to the impertinent account of my late illness, but in which not a grain relates to me, except as being the subject of it.

The very next morning after I was taken ill at Richmond, I heard from that fertile fountain of falsehood and tittle-tattle, that it was said, I had been walking on rough ground, and had fallen down over two *rats*, and could not rise again (the only circumstance that would have been probable), and that a man passing by (which shews the scene was laid in the high road, where neither rats nor I commonly make a promenade), helped me up, and that being struck with gratitude to this neighbour of the Gospel, I asked him what service I could do for him in return? He replied, he should think himself fully recompensed if I would give him a perpetual ticket for seeing

Strawberry Hill whenever he had a mind. Invention, I believe, never flowed more spontaneously nor with greater velocity. Would not one think that this was a commonly dead summer? that France was perfectly calm, ay, and Flanders too, and Holland perfectly safe; that all the *Northern Monarchs were kept from the dusty field?* that there was nothing at sea but my father's *Spithead Expeditions*. Would to heaven there were not! and that Mrs. Fitzherbert and Lord Howe are as satisfied as if both were nodding under *ostrich feathers!* The Richmond tale is like those we used to receive from Cork, when there was not a tittle of news stirring in London. Good night, madam!

LETTER CCCLXXXVII.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 3, 1794.

I SHOULD heartily wish your ladyship joy, madam, of Lord Ossory's new honour,* if you were in the humour to be pleased with it; but as you are not, I must content myself with congratulating him most cordially, and thanking him for notifying it to me himself. You are sure that *I* must feel for him the happiness of being released from the House of Commons, and from the servility of courting popularity for a county election. If some vile French-hired newspapers should abuse him, it will prevent their applauding him, which is scandal indeed! Everything dear to man is at stake, and whoever is young enough to serve his country in any situation, ought,

* An English Peerage.—ED.

and deserves thanks for supporting the Government, and binding himself to it. Is Robespierre a *disinterested* man?

I am not at all surprised at Lord Macartney's miscarriage; nor can help admiring the prudence of the Chinese. They would be distracted to connect with Europeans, and cannot be ignorant of our usurpations in India, though they may be ignorant of Peruvian and Mexican histories, and the no less shocking transactions in France. But I will say no more: I try to turn my thoughts from the present scene; declamation would not relieve them.

LETTER CCCLXXXVIII.

Park Place, Sept. 4, 1794.

I COULD not thank your ladyship sooner for giving me notice of your campaign, as you did not specify your head-quarters, and I am sadly ignorant of military stations; but Marshal Conway tells me I may safely direct my letter to Lord Ossory, at the camp near Harwich, and that it will certainly reach the commandant's lady.

I love discussions, that is, conjectures, on French affairs no more than you, madam; yet I cannot but look on Robespierre's death as a very characteristic event, I mean, as it proves the very unsettled state of that country. It is the fifth Revolution in the governing power of that country in five years; and as faction in the capital can overturn and destroy the

reigning despots in the compass of twelve months, I see no reason for expecting anything like durability to a system compounded of such violent and precarious ingredients. Atrocious a monster as Robespierre was, I do not suppose the alleged crimes were true, or that his enemies, who had all been his accomplices, are a whit better monsters. If his barbarities, which were believed the sole engines of his success, should be relaxed, success will be less sure; and though lenity may give popularity to his successors, it will be but temporary—and terror removed, is a negative sensation, and produces but very transient gratitude; and then will revive unchecked, every active principle of revenge, ambition, and faction, with less fear to control them. I will prophesy no farther, nor will pretend to guess how long a genealogy of revolutions will ensue, when they breed so fast, before chaos is extinct.

Lady Waldegrave, I do believe, madam, is composed, and acts most reasonably; Miss Hannah More has been with her, and has given me verbally a most satisfactory account of her.

If I live so long, I shall hope to have the honour of seeing more of Lady Warwick next summer. I found the same amiable sweetness and gentleness with which I used to be well acquainted at Ampthill years ago.

The "History of the House of Brunswick" I have not seen. It is much the report that we are going to know more of that stock; but I am perfectly ignorant whether there is any foundation for that rumour.

I have read some of the descriptive verbose tales, of which your ladyship says I was the patriarch by several mothers. All I can say for myself is, that I do not think my concubines have produced issue more natural for excluding the aid of anything marvellous.

From hence I can tell your ladyship nothing new, but that the alterations and additions to the house have made it a delightful one, and worthy of the place. I shall return home the day after to-morrow, and am always, madam, your most devoted.

LETTER CCCLXXXIX.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 6, 1794.

Lady Malpas was a formal good sort of woman, madam, of whom I did not see much, as we had never lived in the same kind of society. She was an excellent daughter to a very aged mother, whom the King has good naturedly said, shall retain the lodgings at Hampton Court for her life. Lord Cholmondeley has been as meritorious a son, as Lady Malpas was a daughter: he has been as kind a brother too and uncle to two very handsome nieces, who with their mother have been abroad with him. I could not help saying thus much in return to your ladyship's compliment.

Lady Bute, I fear, is going. It will, indeed, make a new gap in my life, as, since her lord's death, she has always been at home in an evening. Having come into the world when there were such beings as women that

did grow old, she had remembered that odd fashion, and did not set out at midnight for all the crowds in town. But I am talking like Methusalem, and no wonder, for I have tapped my seventy-eighth year, and like other veterans, who think that all the manners, customs, and agreeableness, were in perfection just when they were one-and-twenty, and have degenerated ever since, I am lamenting the loss of my contemporaries, as if the world ought to be peopled by us Strulbrugs. It would be a dull world indeed, and all conversation would consist of our old stories, which I cannot think with the newspapers make us venerable, but tiresome. Here am I living to see the opening of a court of a fourth George, though I was ten years old when I kissed the hand of the First, which young people must think was soon after the deluge, and perhaps be desirous of asking me how soon there were any races after the waters had subsided. It is more surprising that your ladyship should have patience to suffer the annals of my dotage.

Lord Ossory, I conclude, is very glad to have changed his campaign into that against the partridges,

"And turned his harp into a harpsicord,"

but I cannot agree with your ladyship in thinking the bickerings at Paris will come to nothing: though timid of conjecturing after so many disappointments, I cannot conceive how, where there is no stability, there can be a permanent Government. Till some very great man arises—and I see none of the breed—how will the country be settled? Will a fluctuation of factions not

destroy all respect? Will the contradictory reports on the characters of every leading chieftain not confound the armies, who already can be encouraged by nothing but plunder? and who can remain very popular at Paris, while decried by the remaining partizans of so many subverted demagogues? How long it will be before anarchy comes to a sediment, the wisest political chemist cannot determine; but the workings announce new explosions: and at least the search after the philosopher's stone has been as fatal to successive projectors, as it has been to sundry in private life—and certainly has not discovered the *elixir vitæ*.

I am not sorry, madam, that you did not visit the ruins of Houghton, and the relics of my poor nephew's madness, and what his friends and plunderers had yet left to him. You would have found no flight of steps to the front of the house, which one of his counsellors had advised him to remove, and then begged for a villa of his own. You say you went to another scene of desolation, and could not help moralizing. I hold it better to forget than to reflect: what is permanent? What has lasted but the pyramids, and who knows the builder of them? Moralizing is thinking; and thinking is not the road to felicity. I am even of opinion that a line meant as severe, contains the true secret of happiness—

"In Folly's cup still laughs the bubble, Joy."

what signifies whether it be foolish or not, as long as the bubble does not burst; a property which the most eminent sages have not dared to ascribe to wisdom.

LETTER CCCXC.

Strawberry Hill, Dec. 8, 1794.

I AM quite surprised at the constancy of your ladyship's patience, who can still think it worth your while to correspond with Methusalem, who know nothing of the late world, and who have been twice shut up here in my little ark by two new editions of the "Deluge," the amplest we ever knew since my grandfather Noah's, except one, twenty years ago, when the late Duchess of Northumberland was overtaken by it on the road, and was forced to ride with her two legs out of the windows in the front of her post-chaise. The island over against me has begun to emerge, but I have not seen a stripe of a rainbow, and therefore cannot be sure that the flood will not return. However, the season has been so warm, that I have not thought of going to town, nor have been there this age. Indeed, I have outlived all my acquaintance there, and all the hours to which I was accustomed, and it is not worth the trouble of learning new, which I can have but short occasion to use.

Lady Bute is a great loss to me: she was the only remaining one of my contemporaries who had submitted to grow old, and to stay at home in an evening. Lord Macartney I have not seen since his return; nor scarce any body but a few of the natives of Richmond and Hampton Court, and they are still living on the arrangements of the future new court, and of those I have barely heard their names since their christenings; consequently, I know little but what I remember as

an antediluvian (and that with a departing memory), and the height of the waters as a post-diluvian.

Of the new Countess of Exeter I did hear a good account two years ago, especially of her great humility and modesty on her exaltation. If she is brought into the fashionable world, I should think the Duchess of Gordon would soon laugh her out of those vulgar prejudices, though she may not correct her diction or spelling.

I am much obliged to Lord Ossory for his, though vain, hunt after a portrait of Catharine Parr. I have a small damaged one by Holbein that I believe of her, as it resembles a whole length, called hers, too, at Lord Denbigh's, but his Dutch mother, or more than Dutch father, had so blundered or falsified many of the names, though there are many valuable and some fine portraits, that I could depend on few.

On politics I say nothing, madam, as I have no intelligence but from newspapers, and those I seldom believe. I can no more ride in the whirlwind than I can direct the storm; and the scene is a vast deal too wide to let one scan a view from any detached headland. I leave to history to collect the mass together, and digest it as well as it can; and then I should believe it, as I do most ancient histories, composed by men who did not live at the time, and guessed as well as they could at the truth and motives of what had happened, or who, like Voltaire and David Hume, formed a story that would suit their opinions, and raise their characters as ingenious writers. For Voltaire

with his *n'est-ce pas mieux comme cela?* he avowed treating history like a wardrobe of ancient habits; that he would cut, and alter, and turn, into what dresses he pleased; and having made so free with all modes, and manners, and measures, and left truth out of his *régime*, his journeymen and apprentices learnt to treat all uniforms as cavalierly; and beginning by stripping mankind of all clothes, they next plundered them of every rag, and then butchered both men and women, that they might have no occasion even for a fig leaf: a lovely history will that of their transactions be!

LETTER CCCXCI.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 11, 1795.

FROM the little finger of my left, through all that hand, wrist, and elbow, I am a line of gout, madam; and t'other morning waked with such a rheumatism in arm ditto, that I could not turn in my bed; having, I suppose, caught cold by being brought to town the day before, though, as I thought, extremely swaddled.

This account, madam, which Kirgate is forced to write, would be a full answer to the latter part of your ladyship's letter; but it would be uncivil not to say a word to the intelligence of the meeting at Bedford, which I own does not alarm me, though it might flatter a young duke, if he has not yet learnt that 2,000 neighbours of a very rich peer will huzza to anything he condescends to say to them, and will sign their

names, which they love to do if they can write, though they don't understand a sentence of what he proposes to them. But how many of his mob does he imagine would, if he requested them, exchange their goosequills for firelocks, unless for the purpose of shooting his grace's game and venison?

I am sorry he is so un- or so ill-advised. Methinks his grace has lived long enough to have seen how men, who have vented their first outrageous fire in politics, can recant their declamations, and wind up their dregs with shame and pensions.

But I will step out of my buskins, and you shall allow me to smile at your exhortation. You tell me it is my *duty* to go to the House and make a speech. Alas! I doubt, madam. Duty gleams but very dimly when one is at the threshold of fourscore. Your other arguments strike me still more faintly: as I have none of the great abilities and renown of the late Lord Chatham, so I have none of the ambition of aping his death and tumbling down in the House of Lords, which I fear would scarce obtain for me a sixpenny print in a magazine from Mr. Copley.

The best use I have made of my very long life, has been to treasure up beacons to warn me against being ridiculous in my old age. I remember I was in bed with the gout, some years ago, when I was told that the late Duke of Northumberland had been at St. James's that morning to kiss hands for being appointed master of the horse to the King. I said, "Well, the duke is three or four years older than I am, he has the

gout as I have, and he has the stone, which thank God I have not. Now, should anybody come to my bedside, and propose to me to rise and drive about the streets in a gold glass-case, I should conclude they had heard I had lost my senses, though I had not discovered it myself."

Well, madam, that path of glory was not suggested to me; but I have been more recently tempted to enter that Temple to which your ladyship would send me. When my nephew died, Mrs. Epictetus Carter came and wished me joy of my new title, and said, "Now, I hope, you will go to the House of Lords and put down faro."

I have dictated, madam, till I am quite exhausted, and most probably have tired your ladyship, too, and begging your pardon, am for once, your most disobedient humble servant.

LETTER CCCXCII.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 26, 1795.

LORD ORFORD is extremely obliged to Lord and Lady Ossory for their kind inquiries, but very sorry they give themselves that trouble, for there is so little amendment in his situation, and he is so very low and weak, that it is not worth while to detail particulars.

LETTER CCCXCIII.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 14, 1796.

I FLATTER myself, or must bid adieu to all vanities, that your ladyship will not be sorry to hear of my resurrection, which was decided in my favour by a few minutes on Saturday was s'ennight, by the rapid advance of a mortification in my bowels, so that I said to my surgeon, who was holding my clammy cold hand, "Am not I dying?" he replied in a despondent voice, "I hope not!" But my Herculean *weakness*, after a struggle of two days, saved me, and I am again in the land of living easy chairs, though still tossed into bed by three servants; yet, after eleven weeks, the gout has quite left me, and had they any marrow left in them, I could use hands or feet. I don't mean indifferently, like Buckinger; but you see, I pay homage to your ladyship with the first that revives, as you were pleased to order me to give you the first tolerable account of myself that I could. Here, then, I am again, having executed another portion of my death, which I have long reckoned every attack is doing. I have, as I told Lord Ossory ten days ago, patience enough, but I have not time enough for patience, my fits return too quick to leave me sufficient respite for recovery; but if I am totally disabled, I hope the passage will be but the easier!— I have gone through enough of the ceremony.

It is perhaps silly and impertinent to trouble your

ladyship with a detail of my own situation, yet, not having been able for above two months even to dictate a passable account of myself as you desired, I could not forget the years of correspondence with which you have honoured me, nor bear to seem neglectful of that grace, when I have a finger to express remembrance and gratitude. In fact, too, I have always observed that persons shut up from the world, and witnesses to few incidents but those which happen to themselves, grow to think those events of mighty moment, and to relate, as if novelties that could interest any mortal, even when passed and over. 'Tis pity I did not recollect this remark a page sooner!

Secluded as I have lived for weeks, surely events lusty enough and fresh enough have arrived to have pierced even to me, and to have tinged my thoughts with other hues than those all about myself; but pain, languor, a total extinction of voice that forbad my conversing, had rendered me inattentive: I seem to have awaked within a few days!—and what a mass of topics have I found to have been in agitation! Attacks on the King; storms and tempests for several successive months, yet all seeming to belong to summer rather than to winter; dispersion and destruction of navies without encounters; conquest of the Cape and of Trincomalee in an island with which I was well acquainted in my fairy-days, and which was then called *Serendip;* a princess born; *starvation* dreaded; most of the King's sons wandering about the world, the brother of the King of France lodged in Holyrood

House; and the House of Orange in the Palace of Hampton Court; the victories of Clairfait, his armistice, and for these last two days, the forged "French Gazette," announcing universal peace;—these (only the bigger outlines) might have shut my lips about myself. And then for the town's *menus plaisirs*, there has been, and for a little longer will be the new brazen-fronted Shakspeare, to complete the triumvirate with Macpherson, *soi-disant* Ossian, and Chatterton. But none of these themes can be new to your ladyship, and I will rest a weary hand, which for two days has been scrawling these two sides, and I doubt, not made them legible at last.

LETTER CCCXCIV.

Strawberry Hill, July 12, 1796.

I CAN only thank your ladyship by proxy, for a new mark of your accustomed kindness; for, though I am quite content with being here again, which I little expected to be any more, I cannot say I find any benefit by my removal. My fingers are rather worse than they were, and my ankle so weak that I cannot rest upon it a moment, though held up by two servants. But I have all my playthings about me; and, when one is arrived at one's second childhood, is not one fortunate enough in having them and being able to be amused by them? How many poor old wretches are there who suffer more, and who have none of my comforts and assistances, though probably deserving them, which is not my case!

I try to make my soaking hay my principal distress, for the newspapers are too vexatious; the Austrian campaign does not proceed with the rapidity from which I began to expect great matters; and the Gauls are again dictating to the Capitol. I was so silly as to be shocked at their plundering my favourite school, the Bolognese, though I should never have seen it again, when I recollected that I have lost my own pictures at Houghton! What signifies whether Verres or Catherine Slay-Czar has a fine collection under the Pole or on the Place de la Guillotine?

LETTER CCCXCV.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 2, 1796.

HABITUATED as I am, madam, to your ladyship's kindness, for I will not say how many lustrums, can I be surprised at your repeating marks of it to my last hours, even after I have no longer the power of answering it with my own hand, which I could not do with any limb, unless, like Buchinger, I could write with my stumps. From pain, I thank God, I am free, but in no other respect at all recovered; nor expect to be. I am pinned to my couch, and only move from one side of my room to the other, like a coat of arms, by two supporters; and even my motto of *fari quæ sentiat*, you see, madam, I must deliver by a herald.

I will say no more of myself, but to apply part of what I have said to Lord Holland's much too flattering mention of me. While I do remain here, I shall be

happy to be of any use to him: a superannuated invalid would be a very unfit correspondent for a young man of his genius; though I shall be most ready to answer any questions he pleases to ask me, or to give him any information I can about past times, as far as my memory will let me, though much decay there must have accompanied my other defects at seventy-nine, though love of babbling at that age is not a common failure, nor, I fear, one of mine. Old men are apt to think that the moment at which they entered into the great world, was the brightest and most agreeable period possible, and that everything has declined as their contemporaries have gone off. I have not contracted that opinion, for, though the names Lord Holland has found amongst his papers were those of shining men, I have lived to see more marvellous talents of an earlier age, though the felicity of those times makes me prefer the recollection of them to the present.

Our harvests have been gorgeous, madam, indeed; even our farmers acknowledge it—the least they could do to compensate for the scarcity they proclaimed last year, and in part, I believe, only feigned. I wish plenty may be followed by peace: *I* am particularly, at this moment, lamenting one consequence of the war, not from weapons, but by the yellow fever of the West Indies, which has carried off a most meritorious nephew of mine, George Churchill. He was a major-general, and so very spirited and brave a young man, that every letter which during his campaigns was loud

in his praise, frequently drew tears of joy from his father. I had flattered myself, from his aptitude and ability in his profession, that he would prove a second immortal Churchill: alas! immortality has a sad chance in a bad climate! This reflection has persuaded me to be of the opinion of those who have supposed that America was a very juvenile continent when first discovered. I never heard that Jamaica bragged of having produced patriarchs, Methusalems, Nestors, or old Parrs.

LETTER CCCXCVI.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 17, 1796.

I AM exceedingly obliged by your ladyship's congratulation on the supposed safety of my nephew; but alas! I am far from being convinced of it myself, nor am I yet certain that his poor parents are satisfied of it.

I will assuredly, madam, give what answers I can to Lord Holland's questions, when I have had a little time to recollect myself; but on reading them over, I fear my replies will be very imperfect, for on opening the old cupboard of my memory, I perceived its contents were sadly confused; and there is even one person inquired after, a Mr. Wigan, whose person, or even name, I do not recollect, nor ever to have heard of his poetry; but I will scrape together what remnants of recollection I can, and endeavour not to remember too minutely, as old folks are apt to do, what passed in

their earlier days, not because the circumstances were worth being preserved, but because they had happened in *their* time. However, as I can only dictate my remembrances, it will check my garrulity a little. Mercy on Lord Holland, if I were to answer him by word of mouth, for every trifling fact in ancient memories touches the chord of some other, and produces a genealogy of gossiping!

LETTER CCCXCVII.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 30, 1796.

I RETURN your ladyship, with many thanks, Lord Holland's pretty, easy verses, but am sorry he has turned his talent to Greek poetry, with which, if honoured with a sight, I should not understand a line, having forgotten my Greek these forty years. The conclusion to the lady is extremely *genteel*, and there is great ingenuity in rhyming the absurd whims of the Florentine philosopher. I look upon paradoxes as the impotent efforts of men, who, not having capacity to draw attention and celebrity by good sense, fly to eccentricities to make themselves pointed out. It was the delirium of J. J. Rousseau, who possessing a superiority of genius that might have carried common sense to its highest perfection, often distorted by contradicting it and wasted on tricks and *charlatanerie*, meditations that might have led to the noblest discoveries. While we do know so little, have cause to wish to know so much, and have the calamity of acquiescing in so many

errors that might perhaps be exploded to the comfort of mankind, I do not think we are arrived at that period of the world when science and knowledge have nothing better to do than to discover, alter, and correct, the regular order of creation, and the mechanism and habits of the universe and its elements.

Now, madam, with regard to Lord Holland's commissions. Fortunately I have had a visit from Lord Macartney, and have transmitted through him my excuses to Lord Holland, not only for delaying to answer his queries, but in reality to beg he will dispense with my answering them in writing. Listen to my case, madam: when I came to rummage in the old chest of my memory, I found it so full of rubbish that when I came to set down the contents, some of which were imperfect remnants, I grew ashamed, and found I should be writing an Atalantis; and though I should, like Brantôme, protest that all my heroines were *très dignes et très vertueuses princesses*, I should nevertheless be forming a *chronique scandaleuse*, and not a very delicate one, were I to answer to all the queries which relate to a principal performer, Lord Hervey. Still *his* history (*with whom* and with much of which I was well acquainted,) was so curious, that I begged Lord Macartney to tell Lord Holland, that if when I go to town he will honour me with his company for half an hour (out of decency I must not mention a longer space of time, though there is no trusting to an old gossip cock or hen, if you tap their bag of ancient tales) I will satisfy his curiosity as briefly as I can contrive to

do, and without a tittle of invention, which at seventy-nine I assure him I do not possess. His and your ladyship's most obedient, &c.

LETTER CCCXCVIII.

Berkeley Square, Tuesday night, Nov. 6, 1796.

Lord Orford was struck last Thursday night by the intense cold, which first flung him into a violent vomiting, and then gave him great pain in both legs, which turned into an inflammation the next day in the right leg, and seemed tending to an abscess like that he had in the other leg last year. In this state he was brought to town on Friday last, with scarce the sound of a voice, and where he is now lying on a couch in a state of weakness and age, that keeps him from seeing anybody, and makes him incapable of conversing on any subjects, public or private.

All I can possibly do now, madam, is to tell your ladyship, for the information of Mr. Watts, that Mr. Gough's second volume of "Sepulchral Monuments of Great Britain" is come out within these very few days. He had sent it to me, and I found it on my table, and it is the most stupendous and largest volume, I believe, ever seen on this side of Brobdignag, and crammed with prints of all the brasses of the sons of Anak. In vol. ii. p. 309, begins a minute account in that and several subsequent pages, of the tombs of the Percys in Beverley Minster, with quotations from the Bishop of Dromore, as I foretold. My surgeon flatters me that

by fumigations, and the measures he has used, I am likely to escape a wound in my leg.

Well, it may be so; but your ladyship must give me a little time, and let me retire for rest into a closet in my coffin.

LETTER CCCXCIX.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 13, 1796.

I HAVE very few leaves left, indeed, madam, and feel how fast they fall! Your ladyship's remembrance of the perishing old trunk still, I see with gratitude, hangs upon it and honours it like a trophy, when a severe new blast has sadly shaken it! I had loved the Duchess of Richmond most affectionately from the moment I first knew her, when she was but five years old; her sweet temper and unalterable good nature had made her retain a friendship for and confidence in me that was more steady than I ever found in any other person to whom I have been the most attached. It is a heavy blow! I had flattered myself the last time I saw her five months ago, for she came to me twice when I was so extremely ill last winter in town, that she would recover. She has languished ever since, suffered terribly, as much as could be discovered under her invincible patience and silence; but she is gone, and I am still here, though above twenty years older!

The duke, who is exceedingly afflicted, and retains all her servants, and pensioned them all for their lives, has sent me, as the dear soul had desired him, one of

her own rings. I can never put it on my swelled fingers, but I will for ever carry it about me, while there is any *for ever for me!*

Forgive me, my dear lady, for not being able to restrain this gush of grief when my heart was full, and you put the pen into my hand. Though so painful to me to write, I could not have the patience to dictate—but I must take another day before I can finish.

Monday, 14th.

I am come to town to-day, madam, for two days, to see Lady Ailesbury and Mrs. Damer, who are returned from their afflicting attendance on the poor dear duchess to the last; her sister was the only person she knew in those sad moments. But I will say no more; it is not generous to return your ladyship's kindness by venting my sorrows on you, who cannot be interested in them.

As you mention Lord Holland, I have heard that he is going to live in Holland House, and to new furnish it, on which occasion I was desired to beg Lord Ossory to tell him that Mr. Samuel Lysons is having beautiful carpets made of very large dimensions from the Roman pavements, which he has lately discovered in Gloucestershire, and of which, by their own orders, he has carried drawings to the queen and princesses, and which I should think would be handsome ornaments for the spacious rooms at Holland House.

I cannot say that I admire Mr. Burke's pamphlet so much as I expected, especially as I agree with him in not liking our homage to the Pandæmonium. Parts to

me are very obscure: the justice done to the character and firmness of King William is noble, but not a little damaged and contradicted in the sequel, by telling the directory that perseverance must succeed, and that a great country can never want resources. If they take those hints, I hope they will find that he is no prophet on all sides.

For my part I know nothing, but have made one remark as a great novelty in the present times; there is both a King and a Queen dead without being murdered.

LETTER CCCC.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 20, 1796.

Oh! madam, you remember that I have been an antiquary, but you forget that I am a superannuated one, on the verge of fourscore, and that now I know no more of what people did, and what garb they wore five hundred years ago than if I had lived in their time, or were acquainted with the modes in vogue at present. If I had the impudence of an oracle, or could coin equivocal answers extempore, I might expound Gothic rebusses at Beverley: but alack! madam, I have lost my craft, and cannot even recollect why King Stephen rated his chamberlain for charging him all too dear for a new pair of hosen. You may judge how unfit I am grown to solve ancient symbols; for three days ago I received a portly quarto inscribed "History of Kingston on Hull," and little did I conceive that it

meant the town of Hull and not of my little neighbour Kingston.

In short, my dear madam, I am very sorry for being so unable to assist your ladyship's friend's friend in decyphering the queries on which he does me the honour of consulting me about the Minster at Beverley; but I will put him as well as I can into the way of getting some information. I know nothing of the conjunction between the Percys and the Hothams, but I dare to say that Dr. Percy, the present Bishop of Dromore, who has taken true pains to adopt himself into the line of the former, can tell exactly when they conjoined: and what form of shoes the majesties of those times wore, will probably be to be known before Christmas, for Mr. Gough is at the eve of publishing his second volume of "British Monuments," wherein probably will be displayed figures of all the parts of all ancient royal wardrobes.

You see, madam, that it is not from idleness, but from real ignorance, that I give your ladyship's friend such poor information; having outlived my vocation, I can furnish nothing but its ashes.

Give me leave to correct a blunder I made in my last; I mentioned *carpets* made from Mr. Lysons' Mosaic pavements; I ought to have said *oil-cloths*, which cost a great deal less.

LETTER CCCCI.*

Berkeley Square, Jan. 4, 1797.

WELL, madam, little as I expected it would happen, the French have seriously intended to invade *us*, or rather *you*, but so clumsily, that we may rejoice at the experiment; and had we had a little more luck, we might have captured half their expedition, and may still hear of their having lost many of their ships. Seven had nearly fallen into the mouth of Colpoys, but were saved by a fog; those that lay for three days in Bantry Bay took a sudden panic and fled, as if they had just recollected that no venomous creature can live in Ireland. Indeed, whatever invitation they might have received, they were received very inhospitably, not a single crew of a ship was asked to land and drink a glass of whisky, but the whole country was ready to rise and knock their brains out. Those that retired were pursued by two violent storms, and have probably suffered like a mightier Armada. It is supposed that this disappointed invasion was one motive to the interruption of the pacification, though so wretchedly equipped, and so little consonant to the poverty of which they have talked so much lately, and which has made

* Upon the MS. of this letter is written, in Lady Ossory's hand, "Lord Orford's last letter but one in his own hand-writing." It is remarkably firm and clear, but appears to me more like the hand of Kirgate, which was an evident imitation of his master's. It is much stronger and younger than that of November 13, 1796, which he says was his own writing.—ED.

me recollect an expression which my father used on the mobs which were raised by the distillers against his excise bill, whom he called *sturdy beggars*, words re-echoed in a thousand libels.

Another motive for the dismission of Lord Malmesbury, is supposed to be the death of Catherine Slay-Czar; but even that does not seem to promise much favour to the regicides, for the new emperor has already sent a gracious message by Simonin to Louis XVIII., though not very partial to his mother, since he has buried her by his father's side, as if to recall the memory of his murder. Queen Elizabeth had the sense not to vindicate Anne Boleyn.

So much for big politics: I am in your ladyship's debt for your last inquiries after me; I am quite out of pain, and full as well as I am ever likely to be; walk again I never shall, but my invulnerable stomach, my pulse that beats the tatoo as strongly and regularly as a young soldier, and the governor of my citadel, I mean my Serjeant-Surgeon Mr. Huitson, who watches [illegible] incessantly, has removed the inflammation from my leg, and I may last a little longer—if to see France humbled, I shall be glad. I have great faith in our Neptune, Lord Spencer, but even if he should destroy [illegible]nch marine, I shall dread our making a scandalous peace, like those of Utrecht and Paris.

LETTER CCCCII.

Jan. 15, 1797.

MY DEAR MADAM,

YOU distress me infinitely by shewing my idle notes, which I cannnot conceive can amuse anybody. My old fashioned breeding impels me every now and then to reply to the letters you honour me with writing, but in truth very unwillingly, for I seldom can have anything particular to say; I scarce go out of my own house, and then only to two or three very private places, where I see nobody that really knows anything, and what I learn comes from newspapers, that collect intelligence from coffee-houses, consequently what I neither believe nor report. At home I see only a few charitable elders, except about four-score nephews and nieces of various ages, who are each brought to me about once a-year, to stare at me as the Methusalem of the family, and they can only speak of their own contemporaries, which interest me l[illegible]re than if they talked of their dolls, or bats and balls. Must not the result of all this, madam, make me a very entertaining correspondent? And can such l[illegible] worth shewing? or can I have any spirit wh[illegible] and reduced to dictate?

Oh! my good madam, dispense with me fr[illegible]ch a task, and think how it must add to it to [illegible]end such letters being shewn. Pray send me no more such laurels, which I desire no more than their leaves when

decked with a scrap of tinsel and stuck on twelfth-cakes that lie on the shop-boards of pastry-cooks at Christmas: I shall be quite content with a sprig of rosemary thrown after me, when the parson of the parish commits my dust to dust. Till then, pray, madam, accept the resignation of yours, &c., O.

THE END.

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